

The Massachusetts RU4Kids Study: Using Evidence to Improve Medicaid Mental Health Services For Massachusetts Children and Youth

Research on effective child and adolescent mental health interventions has grown significantly over the past two decades. Through the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), Massachusetts policy makers, provider agencies, and advocacy groups are engaged in activities and decision-making on a daily basis that may involve the use of research evidence. The Massachusetts Research Use 4KIDS Study will examine the ways in which research evidence comes into play as children's mental health services are transformed and implemented in the provider community.

The Value of the CBHI Context

The Massachusetts CBHI is rich in opportunities to understand the role and use of research evidence in the transformation of services for children and youth. Beginning with the Rosie D. lawsuit, research evidence has continuously been referenced in arguing for and designing changes in children's mental health services. From the implementation of intensive care coordination services, to the selection of a new in-home service model, to outpatient services, research evidence has been and will continue to be used in many ways.

Why Focus on Direct Service Provider Agencies in the RU4Kids Study?

Provider agencies are on the frontline of the CBHI mission to transform services for children and youth. Decisions about the program models and practices they will provide are critical in shaping the mental health service system. RU4Kids Study activities focus on understanding provider agencies' internal processes for using research evidence as they make these decisions related to the CBHI.

This study is not an evaluation of CBHI outcomes for children and youth, nor is it a study of a specific program model or practice implementation.

The RU4Kids Study Phases and Activities include:



1. Interviews of state-level stakeholders to understand the policy and socio-political context for the role and use of research evidence.



2. An online survey of provider agencies about agency characteristics and their experiences using research evidence.



3. Interviews and focus groups with agency key informants, agency document review, and participation in meetings at six selected agencies.



4. Vetting of preliminary findings by key provider agency and state-level informants.

Final Products

- Briefings to provider agencies and state policy makers regarding strategies for promoting the use of research evidence in the transformation of services for children and youth.
- Recommendations for states and other organizations involved in systems change initiatives to build effective, productive bridges among research, policy, and practice sectors.
- Articles and presentations in professional forums.