

Mental Health Risk Factors Related To Childhood Obesity

As an active participant in the state-wide childhood obesity reduction effort the OMHSAS Office of the Medical Director is requesting that the BH-MCO/County facilitate outreach efforts to BH providers and consumers regarding available resources to address childhood obesity and encourage BH provider and consumer commitment to promote this initiative. Childhood obesity rates have reached epidemic proportions and the responsibility for this problem crosses many program areas. It is important that BH providers and consumers recognize the mental health risk factors associated with childhood obesity. There is a significant social stigma associated with an obese child. These children are often victims of bullying and social isolation which can negatively affect their self-esteem. This in turn may lead to depression. On the other hand an average weight child who is being treated for a mental health condition may be pre-disposed to weight gain/obesity. These children may lack energy to exercise, be immobilized by stress or take medications that cause weight gain. As BH providers and consumers it is our responsibility to recognize these risk factors and work together with the physical health providers who can treat obesity. An electronic toolkit available to all Pennsylvania clinicians to assist in identifying, treating and referring at-risk for overweight and overweight children is available on the Pennsylvania Medical Society website www.pamedsoc.org/obesity. BH providers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this information. In addition there are a number of other educational resources available on the website for both providers and consumers.

The information addressing mental health risk factors related to childhood obesity is based on an article taken from the following website <http://health.yahoo.com/centers/depression/2828>