

Psychiatric Service Capacity for Youth in Milwaukee County:
Analysis of State Medicaid Provider Service Data

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The State Medicaid office was finally able to pry loose from Electronic Data Services a database of all mental health providers who billed Medicaid for services provided in Milwaukee County in 2004. It is extremely rich and informative and answers many of the fundamental questions posed by some participants at the Milwaukee Youth Mental Health Summit in May 2005.

The database contains information about all Milwaukee County providers who submitted a bill for mental health services by a CADAC, psychiatric nurse, psychotherapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, or mental health clinic for services rendered during 2004. It includes categories for unique individuals served, recipients 18 or younger, age categories 0-6, 7-12, and 13-17, total number of contacts billed, and a breakdown of service delivery by each provider by diagnosis groups (substantive categories of ICD9 diagnoses, such as “affective disorders”).

I have attached a very brief table which summarizes some information in this large database. Of the 824 providers listed (almost all are individuals, a few are clinics), 510 (62%) provided services to children during 2004. This confirms that Medicaid certified providers are indeed engaged in providing services to children, and are not primarily focused on serving adults. It also confirms that substantial numbers of providers are active in services to low-income youth and adults.

Psychiatric capacity: There are 107 psychiatrists who treated at least one low-income youth during 2004 in Milwaukee County. 43 of these each treated 20 or more low-income youth during the year, and 33 treated 50 or more. For 36 of these psychiatrists low-income youth clients constituted 40% or more of their total Medicaid caseload, implying that they specialize in youth. All together they had billable contacts with 5,600 low-income youth during 2004, a very substantial number given our estimate of approximately 8,500 low-income youth with mental disorders and impairment county-wide. (Note: Some youth may be double counted in this figure, if they were served during the year by more than one psychiatrist who each billed Medicaid.)

Psychologist capacity: Similarly, the database documents 117 certified psychologists who billed 17,042 contacts with 2,615 low-income youth in 2004 (see double counting caveat, above). 34 of them served at least 20 youth, and 15 each served in excess of 50 young clients. Thirty-one of these psychologists appear to specialize in youth, since at least 40% of their Medicaid caseloads for the year are youth clients.

Psychotherapist capacity: There are more than twice as many psychotherapists serving low-income youth compared to either psychologists or psychiatrists. The 260 therapists registered in the database billed 53,763 contacts with 4,042 low-income youth during the year (see double counting caveat, above). Fifty-four of them served 20 or more unique youth clients each, and 42 appear to specialize in youth.

[The following observations are based on analysis of the full database.]

Services to very young children: Questions have been raised about whether there are mental health professionals prepared to serve the needs of low-income children in the zero to six year range. The database reveals that 44 psychiatrists served 679 such children (4.5% of their caseloads), 69 psychologists served 617 (14.2% of their caseloads) , and 117 psychotherapists served 769 (8% of total caseload). (Note: double counting is possible within each professional category.) Evidently, a substantial level of services is being provided to very young, low-income children.

Generally, absolute capacity does not appear to be a limiting factor in this system relative to the needs documented in the youth mental health study (Lengyel, et al. 2005).

Reference

Lengyel, Thomas E., Jamie Harris, and Martina Graves. 2005. *Connecting Need and Capacity: A Study of Mental Health Services for Milwaukee County Youth*. Milwaukee: Alliance for Children and Families.

Youth Mental Health Service Providers in Milwaukee County: 2004

Type	B Served 50+ unique youth recipients	C # Youth Billed	D Served 20- 49 unique youth recipients	E # Youth Billed	F Served 1 - 19 unique youth recipients	G # Youth Billed	H Total Serving Youth	I Youth = 40% or more of practice	J Total Unique Youth Served by Type**	K Total Units of Billed Services to Youth	L Mean Contacts/case
Psychiatrist	33	5011	10	319	64	270	107	36*	5600	46132	8.24
Psychologist	15	1597	19	611	83	407	117	31*	2615	17042	6.52
Psychotherapist	17	1646	37	1181	206	1215	260	42*	4042	53763	13.30

Source: Database of Medicaid Certified Service Providers Who Billed Medicaid for Services During 2004, updated through 6/17/05

* Count includes only licensed providers who billed 20 or more youth cases in 2004.

** Column may include duplications for youth served by more than one provider of this type during 2004

Key

- Column B Counts the number of MH professionals of the cited type who billed Medicaid for 50 or more unique youth clients during 2004
- Column C The number of unique youth clients served by the MH professionals counted in Column B
- Column D Counts the number of MH professionals of the cited type who billed Medicaid for 20 - 49 unique youth clients during 2004
- Column E The number of unique youth clients served by the MH professionals counted in Column D
- Column F Counts the number of MH professionals of the cited type who billed Medicaid for 1 - 19 unique youth clients during 2004
- Column G The number of unique youth clients served by the MH professionals counted in Column F
- Column H The total professionals of the cited type who billed Medicaid for serving any youth in 2004 (Sum of B + D + F)
- Column I Number of MH professionals of the cited type who billed for 20 or more youth cases and for whom youth cases are 40% or more of their total Medicaid billed cases
- Column J Total number of unique youth served by all MH professionals of the cited type (may contain duplications if a youth client was served by multiple providers of this type) (Sum of C + E + G)
- Column K Number of unique recipient-service date combinations during calendar 2004 (any diagnosis) (i.e., contacts)
- Column L Average billed hours of treatment per unique individual (K/J)