

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Interagency Meetings are held in order to plan your child's treatment and to open the lines of communication.

Interagency Meetings are time limited, usually lasting an hour and a half, so stick to the purpose.

A Parent/Guardian can request an Interagency Meeting be scheduled.

A Parent/Guardian can bring another family member or friend to the meeting for support.

Prior to the Meeting, ask your therapist or case manager for a list of the people attending the meeting. Knowing who will be there can help you prepare.

If a Parent/Guardian is unclear about any service discussed or regulation that needs to be followed, ask the facilitator to explain what you don't understand.

Do not assume that everyone attending the Meeting is experienced.

BE PREPARED. Come to the meeting with your notes.

You are your child's best advocate. Empower yourself.

It is appropriate to request for time to review service options if you are uncertain. But, be aware that taking extra time, may delay when services will begin.

Do not leave the meeting without notes about the plan so that you know *who is going to do what and when they are going to do it.*

If you are concerned about what may happen to your child prior to services beginning, do not leave the Meeting without first developing a crisis plan.

Do not hesitate to call your therapist or case manager after the Meeting to ensure the plan is not delayed.



*the Advocacy Alliance*

### CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN PENNSYLVANIA INTERAGENCY TEAM MEETING

OR

### CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT SERVICE SYSTEM PROGRAM (CASSP) TEAM MEETING

If your child has emotional or behavioral problems, the children's mental health system works with you to arrange the services and supports your child needs. Unfortunately, at times, the children's mental health system can be very confusing and therefore difficult for families to navigate. During the planning of your child's mental health services, you may be required to attend an Interagency, or as it is sometimes referred to, a CASSP Meeting. During this meeting, you will meet the team of agency workers who are responsible to assist you with determining the type and frequency of services your child may need. During this meeting you have many decisions to make. This booklet is designed to provide you with the information needed to allow you to enter this meeting prepared. Preparation will allow you to fully participate in the discussion and therefore be assured that the outcome of the meeting benefits you and your child.

#### **"What is an Interagency Meeting?"**

An Interagency Meeting is a prescheduled meeting that serves as the mechanism for family members or a guardian to meet with the mental health professionals and others involved in the development of a plan of services and natural supports designed to meet the needs of your child. The plan developed must address the concerns and identify the strengths of both the child and the family. In Pennsylvania, many intensive mental health services require that an Interagency Meeting take place prior to the start of these services. The goals of an Interagency Meeting are built upon effective communication, family inclusion and outcome resolution. An Interagency Meeting cannot take place without a parent or guardian in attendance.

*The Advocacy Alliance's Children's Mental Health Advocate works on behalf of children and adolescents with emotional/behavioral disturbances and their families in asserting and protecting their rights in the mental health and various other child-serving systems of care.*

*Visit our website at [www.theadvocacyalliance.org](http://www.theadvocacyalliance.org),  
or call us toll-free a 1-877-315-6855.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who can come to an Interagency Meeting?

Parents may bring another family member, a friend or an advocate for support. Some of the people attending the Meeting may not know your child, but are there to provide information about services or to authorize services included in the treatment plan. Some people attending do know your child and will share their professional opinion about your child's strengths and problems so that treatment issues are addressed.

### Who should come to the Interagency Meeting?

Attendance should be limited to those who can support the family, those who can provide information that is pertinent to the development of the plan and those who can authorize the services included in the plan. To help you prepare, ask your therapist or case manager for the names of the individuals who will attend the Meeting and the reason why they are invited.

### Do I need to prepare for a Interagency Meeting?

YES. Time is limited and with so much to discuss and accomplish, it can be overwhelming, so come prepared with notes.

Talk to someone you trust and write down everything you feel should be addressed/discussed. Questions such as: What you would like to see happen for your child in the future? Is there a specific time of day and under what circumstances your child experiences difficulties? For example, if your child takes medication at night and does not function well in the morning, then you would want to address this. What is the time of day and under what circumstances does your child achieves success? Your child's successes are just as important as his/her difficulties.

### How will I know what information is going to be shared about my child and family at the Interagency Meeting?

You control the information you want to share and the information you agree an agency can share about you and your family when you sign a Release of Information Form. Carefully read all Releases of Information Forms before you sign.

### What if I do not want a system or agency to attend my child's Interagency Meeting?

You can request that people/agencies attend only a particular part of the meeting. For instance, if your child's plan is to include school support, then a school representative can be asked to attend that part of the Meeting when the school support services are being discussed and/or authorized. If your child's plan does not include school support services, then a school representative should not attend. However, if you do not have custody, you may not legally be able to make any decisions about your child's plan. It is still important to your child that you attend all his/her meetings.

### What if something is said that I do not understand?

ASK.ASK.ASK. Chances are that you are not the only one who has questions. Many agencies have new staff that may attend, so never assume that you are the only one who doesn't understand. Also, each child system uses different terms and language that is not familiar to everyone sitting around the table, so do not be afraid to ask questions. Direct your questions to the facilitator, who will be identified at the beginning of the Meeting, if an unfamiliar term is used or if you do not understand something that is said.

### What if someone shares my personal information that I did not give them permission to share?

If someone shares your personal information, and you did not give him/her permission to share it, immediately ask the facilitator to stop the Meeting and talk to your caseworker or therapist in private. You can then decide if you want the Meeting to continue. Afterward, you need to consider if you want to report this possible breach of confidentiality to an agency supervisor.

### How long does it take to put the plan in place?

ASK if there is a waiting list for any of the services being suggested. You must also ask if it is expected to be difficult to get staff or if any problems are anticipated that may impact the plan. Ask what the approximate time frames are for services to begin.

### What happens if I do not agree with their suggestions or the planning?

No plan takes effect without your approval. Remember when planning that certain services are tied to specific regulations and some services have time limits. This is the type of information that you need to obtain from the other team members so that you can make informed decisions. If the decision is made to try the plan, be certain that another Interagency Meeting is scheduled in order to review and monitor the plan's progress.

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE INTERAGENCY MEETING

### What if I am asked to sign Releases of Information? What are my rights?

You may be asked to sign Releases of Information, which allows one agency to share information with another agency or system, in order to carry out a referral for service or another part of the plan. NEVER sign a Release of Information, that does not have every line completed and ALWAYS ask for a copy of every Release of Information or form that you sign.

If you are asked to sign a Release of Information for a report (i.e., a report from your child's psychiatrist) so that the information in that report can be shared with another system or agency, ask the person requesting your signature what options you have and what the consequences of releasing this information can be.

ALWAYS read a report before giving permission for the report to be shared. There may be some information in the report that either you do not agree with or that you do not want anyone to know. You can limit the information being shared in the report to only that part of the report you feel is pertinent. **REMEMBER:** Once an agency or school has your information, it becomes their property and you risk losing control of who can review it.

### What if I forget something afterward?

You should attempt to secure a copy of the minutes or notes taken along with an attendance log from the facilitator before you leave. If the Meeting minutes are not immediately available, ask for a guarantee that a copy be forwarded to you as soon as they are available.

### What do I do with my child at home if there is a problem before the plan begins?

It is possible that your child will need an emergency plan in case a crisis occurs before the services identified in the plan begin. Even though hospitalization may not be required, an immediate response may be needed to diffuse a situation. Ask the facilitator to address your concerns. At this time, the team can help design a crisis plan for you and your child.