

Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee  
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Testimony Provided by  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Leigh Johnson and I am representing BASIC, a statewide consortium of Ohio's largest children's behavioral healthcare providers. I work for Wingspan Care Group, the largest provider of children's behavioral health in Ohio. I am here today to bring attention to the serious flaws that remain in the current redesign proposal that, if implemented, will hurt Ohio's children and shift significant cost to school systems, counties, the juvenile justice system, and the state.

Ohio is redesigning the community behavioral health (BH) Medicaid benefit in preparation to carve it into managed care. Wingspan and its BASIC partners support the integration of behavioral healthcare. For example, at Wingspan we have been working closely with our pediatric practice, hospital, FQHC, and MCO partners. We have collaborated on projects from maternal depression to HEDIS compliance to emergency room diversion. We are building a physical health care practice and a psychiatric hospital to expand our integrated continuum of care. Wingspan has invested millions of dollars in technology and personnel as we prepare to support new service delivery and reimbursement models.

Wingspan has represented BASIC on the BH Redesign committee (redesign). As BASIC's representative, Wingspan has actively participated in both large and small workgroups to assist in the redesign effort. BASIC's goal was and is to ensure that the redesign includes services, benefit limits, and reimbursement rates that facilitate compliance with EPSDT and reflect the understanding that children are different. We acknowledge that ODM and ODMHAS have spent significant time seeking stakeholder input. Unfortunately it appears this input was largely ignored in the draft final redesign proposal. If implemented as currently proposed children will be hurt in the following ways –

1. Group and partial hospitalization (PH) services are dismantled and underfunded in the redesign proposal. The group methodology is critical to serving children. It is an effective and efficient treatment modality that supports children so they can remain in their homes, schools, and communities. The proposed reimbursement rate cuts coupled with new service definitions that increase administrative costs will substantially reduce children's access to these services. Without access to group services the outcome for children across the state will be decreased school attendance and achievement, increased police, juvenile court, and child welfare involvement, increased emergency room and hospital utilization, and increased need for residential placement.

2. While BASIC supports the addition of family psychotherapy in redesign, its addition at a lower rate than our current psychotherapy rate will hurt children by providing a disincentive for providers to work with families. Family therapy is a necessary service for children and must be fairly funded.

3. The rates for crisis services are cut in redesign, putting at risk the availability of this critical service for children and families. The proposed rates will not support the continued existence of 24 hour crisis response teams currently in place at community mental health centers across the state. Reducing or eliminating access to this service is dangerous. It will put children at imminent risk of harm thereby increasing emergency room and hospitalization utilization and improperly shift the burden of behavioral health emergency response to local police.

While ODM asserts that it has made a significant investment in the redesign, children do not receive the benefit of this investment. The services that are most critical to children have been cut, unnecessarily complicated, and dismantled. I ask that you scrutinize the redesign of these services and ensure that they are adequately supported in the final BH Medicaid benefit.

Thank-you for the opportunity to testify today. I'd be happy to answer questions.