

Agencies & Systems

HHS - Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Oversees public health, Medicaid, mental health, and child welfare services

DHS - Department of Human Services

Legacy term still used in many discussions

MCO - Managed Care Organization

Private insurers contracted to manage Medicaid services in Iowa

MHDS - Mental Health and Disability Services

Iowa's regional service delivery system for mental health and disabilities

AE - Administrative Entity

Coordinates mental health services at the regional level

CSA - Core Service Agency

Local agency responsible for coordinating behavioral health services

Conditions & Diagnostic Terms

SED - Serious Emotional Disturbance

Diagnosis often used for children/youth in mental health settings

SMI - Serious Mental Illness

Chronic mental health conditions affecting functioning

RAD - Reactive Attachment Disorder

Common among adopted/foster youth; affects relationships and regulation

ID - Intellectual Disability

A developmental condition impacting cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior

ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Neurodevelopmental disorder impacting communication and behavior

Assessment & Service Terms

LOCUS - Level of Care Utilization System

Tool used to determine level of care needs for youth and adults

CINA - Child in Need of Assistance

Court status for children needing protective intervention or services

RTC - Residential Treatment Center

Facilities providing long-term behavioral health care

PRTF - Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility

Medicaid-funded psychiatric facility for youth with intensive needs

PMIC - Psychiatric Medical Institution for Children

Iowa-specific term for youth mental health facilities with lower acuity than PRTF

IEP - Individualized Education Program

Education plan for students with disabilities or special learning needs

Common Buzzwords & Advocacy Language

Wraparound Services - Comprehensive, individualized care across systems (home, school, medical)

Care Coordination - Managing and aligning services across providers for a single child or family

System of Care - A collaborative framework for delivering community-based mental health services

Family Voice / Youth Voice - Centering families or youth in service planning and decision-making

Crisis Stabilization - Immediate, short-term intervention to reduce risk and prevent hospitalization

Step-down Placement - A less intensive care setting after a more restrictive facility

Trauma-Informed Care - Service approach that recognizes the impact of trauma on behavior and healing

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Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - The most inclusive setting for care or education, based on need

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