



FULFILLING MEDI-CAL'S PROMISE

What Are Katie A. Services and Why Are They Critical?

The health and safety of youth with serious mental health needs must be treated as an absolute priority. Here's why:



KATIE'S STORY: With her mother homeless and father incarcerated, four-year-old Katie A. entered California's foster care system. By age five, Katie's assessments indicated she was a victim of trauma and in need of treatment. Despite pleas to child welfare, Katie never received the mental health treatment she needed. Instead, she was shuffled through an astonishing 37 placements in 10 years, including psychiatric facilities and group homes. This instability and lack of adequate treatment was devastating: **California's mental health service system failed Katie.**

Katie's story is not so unusual. Children who are abused, neglected and removed from their families disproportionately suffer mental health disorders. Youth living with foster parents or in group homes have about **4 times** the rate of serious mental health needs as young people living with their own families. Children with the greatest mental health needs often receive inadequate mental health support: Roughly **3 out of 5** children in out-of-home care have moderate to severe mental health issues, but fewer than **1 in 3** receive any mental health treatment at all.



THE LAW: System-wide deficiencies are not only harmful to children like Katie – they are **against the law.** Under federal law, states **MUST** provide children and youth a broad array of mental health services and supports, including treatments based in a child's home and community, not in a facility or group home. **If more children receive intensive mental health treatment in their homes before behaviors escalate beyond their families' ability to cope, fewer children will enter foster care.** Filed in 2002, the *Katie A. v. Bonta* lawsuit sought to enforce the law and fix the youth mental health system. **As a result, new, more intensive services are available, and collaboration between California's child welfare and mental health systems has improved.** Child and Family Teams, where young people, their caregivers, and their treatment team work together to set goals and plan care, are much more readily available to young people. When fully realized, as many as 35,000 California youth may receive intensive mental health services in their own homes and communities each year.



THE SERVICES: "Katie A. services" include **Intensive Care Coordination (ICC), Intensive Home Based Services (IHBS), and Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC).** These services are provided in a young person's home or school or recreation center so that they don't have to grow up isolated, in far away facilities. And, young people and their families help create the treatment plan based on *their*

own needs, strengths, and goals. **Serving youth with intensive mental health needs in this way means better life outcomes – better school performance, less involvement with police and the courts, more satisfying relationships – and less disruption, a fact affirmed by research and practice nationwide.**



A CLOSER LOOK: What are ICC, IHBS & TFC?

Intensive Care Coordination (ICC):

- Creates a Child and Family Team (CFT) made up of a child’s formal (care coordinator, providers, case managers) and natural supports (family, neighbors, mentors).
- Together, the CFT employs a treatment plan of individualized services that celebrates the strengths and goals of the youth and family.
- The young person’s health care providers and support network work together to provide effective services in home and community settings.

Intensive Home Based Services (IHBS):

- Encourages the Child and Family Team to help the youth build and maintain skills needed to thrive.
- Treatment interventions are highly individualized, evidence-based wherever possible, and not arbitrarily limited in how long or often they may be used.
- Includes strength-based services and supports to address mental health-related issues that may harm the child’s development and wellbeing.
- Educates young people and their families about the youth’s mental health challenges and how to manage them together as a team.

Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC):

- Intensive, individualized mental health services are “wrapped around” the youth in the therapeutic foster home.
- Foster parents are given specialized trainings and access to a diverse network of support.
- Generally, only one or two youth reside in a therapeutic foster home to allow for greater care and oversight.



THE PROMISE OF KATIE A.: Home and community-based services are critical for youth AND are legally mandated. Children and youth have a right to quality care that allows them to succeed in school, build lasting relationships, and become constructive members of society. *Katie A.* services represent an enormous opportunity to give youth with serious mental health needs the same freedoms as their peers – to live healthy and fulfilling lives, on their own terms.

For more information on Katie A. services, email fulfillingthepromise@youngmindsadvocacy.org. You can also visit the following resources on our website:

www.youngmindsadvocacy.org/fulfilling-Medi-Cal's-Promise/

www.youngmindsadvocacy.org/Our-Work/Policy-Action/Improving-Access-to-Community-Based-Care/