



Bright Futures in Practice



SELF • FAMILY • FRIENDS • COMMUNITY

MENTAL HEALTH

VOLUME I

PRACTICE GUIDE

Introduction

How can health professionals, especially primary care health professionals, effectively promote mental health in children, adolescents, and families? How can health professionals best work with families to help children and adolescents attain the self-esteem and self-efficacy, productivity, connectedness and intimacy with others, and joy that are the hallmarks of healthy growth and development? How can health professionals engage community and school resources to support the mental health of infants, children, and adolescents? These are the fundamental questions *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health* attempts to answer.

Although mental health in clinical settings traditionally has connoted a focus on mental illness and treatment, *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health* focuses primarily on promotion of mental health and on prevention and early recognition of psychosocial problems and mental disorders. Working in partnership with families and communities, health professionals can foster attitudes and actions that lead to healthy development of the child's or adolescent's self-worth, family relationships, school performance, friendships, and activities within the broader community. The information and resources in this guide provide primary care health professionals with the tools needed to promote mental health in children, adolescents, and their families, to recognize the early stages of mental health problems and mental disorders, and to intervene appropriately.

Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health is based on two core premises. First, the mental health of

children, adolescents, and families is a vital and compelling concern for health professionals. Second, health professionals, particularly primary care health professionals, are in a unique position to develop the relationships with children, adolescents, and their families necessary for promoting mental health and recognizing early signs of psychosocial problems.

The importance of primary care professionals in promoting children's and adolescents' mental health is well established. Empirical studies document both the prevalence of mental disorders among children and adolescents, and the extent of the attention directed toward mental health issues in primary pediatric care. Approximately 12 percent of all children and adolescents in primary care pediatric settings have substantial psychosocial difficulties; risk factors such as poverty and chronic illness may increase the prevalence rate to more than 20 percent (Wolraich, 1996). Recent cost studies suggest that children with psychosocial disorders use health care services more frequently than those without such disorders (Bernal et al., 2000; Jellinek et al., 1999).

The developmental chapters, bridge topics, and accompanying volume of clinical tools that compose the mental health guide can help primary care health professionals provide enhanced mental health supervision ranging from mental health promotion to the diagnosis and primary care management of mental disorders. *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health* joins the Bright Futures series of practice guides and other efforts to enable busy health professionals to provide optimal care for children, adolescents, and their families.

How This Guide Is Organized

Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health is designed to be read in two ways: (1) cover-to-cover, to enhance understanding of mental health promotion in a developmental context, and (2) as a “how-to” manual, by turning directly to specific issues or problems. An annotated table of contents and an index are provided, as well as links throughout the guide to other relevant sections on specific topics. To provide balance and be inclusive, gender pronouns are alternated throughout the guide.

The guide has three parts or components: developmental chapters, bridge topics on specific problems and disorders, and the *Mental Health Tool Kit (Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health—Volume II. Tool Kit)*. An introductory chapter, Making Mental Health Supervision Accessible, reviews the current context for the provision of mental health services, including topics such as continuity of care, collaboration, cultural competency, and reimbursement issues.

Developmental Chapters

The first part of the guide is organized developmentally, with chapters on infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. The developmental chapters provide primary care health professionals with

- Key information on each stage of child and adolescent development;
- Tips for preventive efforts and for addressing areas of concern;
- Suggestions for office practice and building partnership with the community;
- A developmental checklist;
- References to the bridge topics and to tools for both the professional and the family; and
- References to teaching cases developed by the Bright Futures Center for Education in Child Growth and Development, Behavior, and Adolescent Health.¹

Each developmental chapter is divided into four sections reflecting spheres of child and adolescent functioning: self, family, friends, and community. Each section begins with applicable health supervision questions drawn from *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. These questions are related to the key points discussed in the section of the mental health guide and help the health professional link the two guides. Although the health supervision questions can initiate a dialogue with the family, it is important to allow adequate time during the visit

¹The Bright Futures Teaching Cases are available on the Web at www.pedicases.org, or in print by calling (617) 355-CASE (2273). More than 25 self-contained educational modules are available, covering topics in child growth, development, behavior, and adolescent health. Each module consists of a case abstract, a statement of goals and objectives, a facilitator’s guide to leading discussion, a case narrative, an annotated bibliography, teaching handouts, and evaluation forms. The materials were written and edited by faculty from Children’s Hospital in Boston and Harvard Medical School with sponsorship from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau and Genentech Foundation. The cases have been reviewed by nationally recognized experts and have been pilot-tested and evaluated in pediatric residency programs across the United States.

for parents, children, and adolescents to raise their own questions and concerns.

Bridge Topics

The second part of the guide contains bridge topics that address the most common mental health problems and mental disorders occurring in childhood and adolescence. Each chapter is a quick primer for the primary care health professional on the diagnosis, severity, and primary care management of specific disorders. These chapters form a bridge from promotion and prevention to early recognition and management of mental health problems and mental disorders. The bridge topics are designed to help primary care health professionals traverse the continuum of care from clinical preventive services to assessment, diagnosis, and targeted interventions. Bridge topics cover

- Criteria for specific problems and disorders, based on *The Classification of Child and Adolescent Mental Diagnoses in Primary Care: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Primary Care (DSM-PC) Child and Adolescent Version* and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text revision) (DSM-IV-TR).^{2,3}

- Early identification.
- Interventions based on functioning in the context of self, family, friends, and school and community.
- Use of a wide range of office-based and community resources.
- Referral for specialized mental health services as indicated.

The mental health problems and mental disorders discussed in the bridge topics are linked to specific references in DSM-IV-TR and DSM-PC, and selected materials and diagnostic criteria from these manuals are reproduced in the appendix.

Mental Health Tool Kit

The third component of the mental health guide is the *Mental Health Tool Kit*. The tool kit is a companion volume of tools to assist health professionals in screening, education, and health care management. The tool kit includes handouts for families on issues ranging from sibling adjustment to recognizing symptoms of depression.

²The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text revision) (DSM-IV-TR), developed by the American Psychiatric Association, and *The Classification of Child and Adolescent Mental Diagnoses in Primary Care: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Primary Care (DSM-PC) Child and Adolescent Version*, developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, are classification systems for mental health problems and mental disorders. DSM-IV-TR provides a comprehensive classification of recognized psychiatric disorders. DSM-PC focuses on developmental variations in behavior, problems, and mental disorders likely to be encountered in primary care practice with children and adolescents. These manuals can assist the health professional in recognizing and diagnosing mental health problems and mental disorders, provide a common language for discussion and research, and establish coding criteria for reimbursement.

³The *Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (Diagnostic Classification: 0–3)* is another resource for primary care health professionals who provide care for children ages birth to 3 years, and for their families. DC: 0–3 contains axes and diagnostic categories that define new constructs arising out of clinical and research experience with infants, young children, and their families. DC: 0–3 provides a framework for identifying strengths and weaknesses in infants or young children and the caregiving environment, and for creating, in partnership with the family, a developmentally appropriate, comprehensive treatment or management plan.