

Impact and Outcome

My name is Paula Reszel and I am the mother of three sons. Two of my sons were diagnosed with a serious mental illness/serious emotional disturbance and their behaviors at home were very volatile. My oldest son spent almost a solid three years in 2 PMIC (Psychiatric Medical Institute for Children) settings. My other son was never in a PMIC setting but he had multiple hospitalization and multiple emergency visits for his mental health.

As a mother of children with behavior/mental health concerns I felt like a failure as a parent and a failure as a human being. What had I done to cause my children to behave this way? Should I have beat them with a belt? Some parents resort to this in this state. Should I have shamed them and told them how “bad” and “horrible” they were? Some parents say this to their children on a daily basis. There was no one to reach out to; no one that could listen to my concerns and provide validation and support. What about a therapist? Ha! Unless they have been in that situation they are talking from a textbook and lectures learned in college.

I was once an IHH (Integrated Health Home) family peer support specialist. I met parents who felt just as I did when I was raising my sons. They asked what they did wrong. Nothing. They asked why they were failing at parenting. They weren't. I consoled countless parents as they told me about the previous evening with their raging child. I am 100% positive I saved the insurance companies money by helping these families stay together at home in a healthy, safe environment. Were there some that didn't? You bet. Those pale in comparison to those that did.

I now work as an IHH Care Coordinator and work with children on the CMH (Child Mental Health) waiver and with their siblings who are enrolled in the IHH program. My job is not easy as I try to help these families work on parenting in a positive way that best meets the child(ren)'s behavior and mental health needs. Some days are harder than others and some days I don't get a phone call and I take a big breath in celebration of a day without a crisis.

If you have never raised a child(ren) with mental/behavioral health concerns then everything I write is not impacting you. I don't want you to think about my words but think of the thousands of families that will be impacted should their IHH support go away.

I can guarantee you will see an uptick in hospitalizations, emergency room visits, PMIC placements, and calls to the local police department. I urge you to call me and come with me to a family's home to listen to them and hear the direct impact IHH has had for their family. Come visit the trenches and explain to a parent(s) why United doesn't want to fund a service some have had for the past 3, almost 4, years. Come to the homes where kids are crying, cigarette smoke hangs in the air, bugs crawl under furniture and behind dirty dishes, where the mom is overwhelmed and the father is missing. I sincerely invite you to come to homes where the only hope is the IHH personnel who calls or stops by to offer help and explain why you feel they no longer need that hope.