FINDING CARE NEAR ME

A FACT SHEET TO HELP YOU ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH CARE THROUGH KATIE A. SERVICES
Are you a young person struggling with anxiety, depression, or another mental health condition?

This fact sheet is intended for young people under 21 who have been struggling with a mental health condition, like anxiety or depression, and are looking for help. If this sounds like something you are experiencing, you might qualify for a specific type of free mental health service designed to meet your unique needs and preferences. These services are called Katie A. or Pathways to Wellbeing Services.

In order to qualify, you need to be younger than age 21 and must have Medi-Cal (California’s public health insurance program) or be eligible for Medi-Cal. A mental health professional must also determine that you need the services.

Read on to figure out if these services might help you, and how you can access them!

What exactly are Katie A. services?
“Katie A.” was a young person in foster care in California who experienced a lot of hardship growing up. She entered foster care when she was only four years old because her mother was homeless and her father was imprisoned. Even though she had a clear need for mental health treatment, she didn’t get helpful services in time.

To make matters worse, she was shuttled between 37 homes and residences while growing up! The constant and severe disruptions to her daily life affected her mental health in many ways.

As a teenager, Katie decided to represent thousands of other foster youth, and sued California in 2002 to make sure that the state provided the mental health supports, as required under the law.

* KATIE A. IS NOT HER REAL NAME.

**THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF KATIE A. SERVICES, BUT ALL KATIE A. SERVICES SEEK TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS:**

**PREVENTING** youth from being sent to far-away group homes or juvenile hall, in order to get mental health care.

**MAKING SURE** that youth receive effective services in a nurturing community environment, and that their families, friends, and other trusted adults may help with their care.

**CELEBRATING** and honoring youths’ unique strengths and talents, rather than focusing only on their problems or “deficits.”

**ENSURING** that youths’ treatment plans are tailored to meet their specific needs.
OKAY, I’M INTERESTED. HOW DO I KNOW IF I’M ELIGIBLE?

☑ You must have Medi-Cal insurance coverage (California’s version of Medicaid, a federal, public health insurance program) or be eligible for Medi-Cal.

  If you don’t know whether you have Medi-Cal, your parents or guardian should know. Also, almost all foster youth have Medi-Cal.

☑ You must be under age 21.

☑ A mental health professional must find that you have a need for Katie A. services.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Here are some questions that might help you figure out whether Katie A. services would be useful to you. If you answer “yes” to at least one of the questions below, you might want to speak with a mental health professional to help you determine whether you qualify.

HAVE YOU BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

IF YOU’VE RECEIVED SERVICES FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, (FOR EXAMPLE, GROUP THERAPY), ARE YOU UNHAPPY OR FRUSTRATED WITH THE SERVICES?

DO YOU TAKE PILLS/MEDICATIONS FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION? IF SO, DO YOU FEEL THAT THEY’RE NOT HELPING YOU?

HAVE YOU BEEN SEPARATED FROM YOUR FAMILY?

ARE YOU IN FOSTER CARE OR INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD WELFARE, COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH, OR JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

DO YOU HAVE AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN AT SCHOOL (SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES), WHICH INCLUDES MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, LIKE SEEING A COUNSELOR AT SCHOOL, OR ADDRESSES AN “EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE” MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS?

HAVE YOU EVER SPENT TIME IN A HOSPITAL BECAUSE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS?

* THIS LANGUAGE (“EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE”) MAY NOT REFLECT YOUR BELIEFS, BUT AS A LEGAL TERM, IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW TO NAVIGATE HEALTHCARE.
IF I’M ELIGIBLE FOR KATIE A. SERVICES, CAN MY COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT STILL DENY THE SERVICES?

No! Under the law, if you qualify for Katie A., the state MUST make sure that you receive the services in a timely manner and that you receive the level of support that you need. By law, your local mental health department CANNOT use waiting lists or put limits on the number of youth who can access Katie A. services.

CAN MY FAMILY PARTICIPATE IN MY TREATMENT AND HELP ME AND MY MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MY CARE? WHAT ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE IN MY LIFE? A TEACHER? A COACH? MY BEST FRIEND?

Yes! Your family, supporters, and mentors in your life can absolutely be involved. Youth who receive Katie A. services get what’s called a “Child and Family Team” (CFT), which may include people who play a supportive role in their lives, whether as a parent, coach, teacher, or mental health provider. Ultimately, though, it’s up to you to decide whether or not you want your supporters to be involved.

WHERE DO I RECEIVE KATIE A. SERVICES?

You and your CFT will determine locations for services that best meet your needs. Possible locations include, but aren’t limited to: and other community venues! You can also meet in a clinic or therapist’s office, if that’s your choice.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFO ABOUT KATIE A. SERVICES AND WHETHER I’M ELIGIBLE?

1. Ask your parents or caregivers whether you have Medi-Cal. If you’re a foster youth, you almost certainly have it.

2. You or your caregiver — or another trusted adult in your life — should call the behavioral health department in the county where you live to determine whether you qualify for Katie A. If you’re already working with a mental health professional, he or she should also be able to determine whether you’re eligible for Katie A. and can make a referral to the county.

3. Once you know you qualify for Katie A., your local behavioral health department will probably do an assessment of your needs/strengths.
4 Your local behavioral health department will begin forming your Child and Family Team to create a service plan and begin providing you with the specific supports that you need.

5 You have a lot of power in voicing and determining what you need and what works best for you. So, for example, if there’s a place where you feel very comfortable and safe receiving services — like a park — make sure to let your CFT know.

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT COUNTRIES VARY IN HOW ACCESSIBLE THEIR INFORMATION IS, SO YOU MIGHT NEED TO BE PERSISTENT IN GETTING THE HELP YOU NEED AND DESERVE.

YOU CAN USE THE INFORMATION INCLUDED HERE AND THE OTHER RESOURCES PROVIDED BELOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING! PLEASE ALSO SHARE THIS FACT SHEET WITH YOUR SUPPORTERS & FRIENDS!

CHECK THESE OUT FOR MORE INFO!

- https://www.ymadvocacy.org/tag/katie-a/

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TYPES OF KATIE A. SERVICES, CHECK OUT OUR BACKGROUND SHEET!