

# CPCP is here to help: When to request a consultation

National concerns have been raised in recent decades regarding possible over-reliance on psychotropic medications in children under the age of 18, especially in particularly vulnerable subgroups like children in foster care. For example, according to a 2008 [Government Accountability Office](#) report, children in foster care in Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and Texas were prescribed antipsychotic drugs at 2 times to 4 times the rate of those not in foster care. The report noted that (1) hundreds of children were found to be taking five or more psychotropic medications at a time, although there was no medical evidence to support such a drug regimen; (2) thousands of children were prescribed doses that exceeded FDA-approved guidelines; and (3) monitoring programs for psychotropic drugs provided to foster children fell short of guidelines established by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). The report did acknowledge that “higher rates do not necessarily indicate inappropriate prescribing practices, but according to research, experts consulted, and certain federal and state officials, could be due in part to foster children’s greater mental health needs, greater exposure to traumatic experiences, and the challenges of coordinating their medical care.”

**Nonetheless, because of these concerns, some states require primary care providers to consult with their Child Psychiatry Access Programs regarding certain youth in their practices, including:**

- Children receiving two or more atypical antipsychotics (AAPs).
- Children age 4-5 or younger receiving psychotropic medications.
- Children receiving four or more psychotropic medications.
- Children taking higher than typical doses of psychotropic medications (such as two times FDA max).

The State of Wisconsin does NOT have any mandated psychotropic medication review rules. However, it would be very reasonable to consult us regarding any of your patients who currently meet the above criteria.

## **Patient circumstances when you may want to consult CPCP:**

- Children who have been taking a particular psychotropic medication for more than 1 year without attempts to taper it off to gauge ongoing need.
- Children who have recently been psychiatrically hospitalized and discharged on new psychotropic medication(s).
- Children who are undergoing changes in placement (such as into foster care, or moving back home after foster care placement).
- Children who have been expelled or repeatedly suspended from school.
- Children who are involved with the juvenile justice system.

## **Other circumstances when you may want to use CPCP:**

- If you are unsure what should be monitored during prescription of psychotropic medications.
- If mental health difficulties seem to be interfering with the treatment of a child’s medical illness.
- If alcohol/substance abuse issues may be present.
- If parental mental health or alcohol/substance abuse difficulties may be negatively impacting the child.

**Bottom line:** Mental health problems in children and teens are often quite complex and deciding when to intervene can be difficult. **CPCP is here to help!**