

## **WHEN HOSPITALIZATION OR RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER PLACEMENT IS APPROPRIATE**

Many years ago, children with severe and persistent mental illness were placed in institutions for long periods of time away from their families and everything familiar in their lives. Today, armed with a better understanding of the negative effects of institutionalization and the availability of new medications and treatments, we understand that children rarely need to spend time in inpatient settings.

Hospitalization is generally a short-term emergency measure providing a secure setting in which to stabilize medications and the out-of-control behavior caused by episodes of illness. A child may be hospitalized when multiple medical and psychiatric issues are not clear and more time is needed to make a diagnosis and stabilize medications for all conditions. Hospitals are not an appropriate setting when maximum benefit has been reached for inpatient care.

A child may be admitted to a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) when time is needed in a highly supervised setting to change self destructive or other anti-social behaviors. The goal of RTC placement is to prepare children to re-enter their homes. Daily public education classes (including special education accommodations) are included. Parents are expected to participate in treatment as much as possible and learn how to manage the child at home.

Occasionally, parents/caregivers/guardians cannot cope with the mentally ill child and maintain stability with other members of the family, and alternative care becomes necessary. These circumstances need to be thoroughly discussed with mental health professionals and social services case workers, if involved.