

Screening, Assessment, and Support Services (SASS) for Children and Adolescents

What is SASS?

Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), is a crisis mental health service program for children and adolescents, who are experiencing a psychiatric emergency. SASS agencies provide intensive mental health services for eligible children and youth who may need hospitalization, or community based mental health care. SASS services are available by calling the CARES line.

What Is CARES and When Should CARES Be Called?

CARES stands for Crisis and Referral Entry Services. CARES is a telephone response service that handles mental health crisis calls for children and youth in Illinois. A parent/guardian may check to see if their child can receive SASS services, by calling the **CARES Crisis Line: 1-800-345-9049 (Voice), 1-773-523-4504 (TTY).**

You should call CARES when a child is at risk to himself or others and any time you or others think a child is having a mental health crisis. If a child has mental health problems, but is not a risk to self or others and is not experiencing a crisis, contact your local community mental health services provider on the IDHS website at: <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=&county=> or call our Child and Adolescent Client Assistance Line at: 312-793-1361, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (excluding Holidays).

What Is the Purpose of CARES?

The purpose of CARES is to ask questions of the child's parents, caregivers, or other callers about the child's behavior. CARES will then either send the local area SASS agency to see the child and guardian, or refer the child and guardian to community mental health or other services.

Who Can Receive SASS Services?

Any child or youth in a mental health crisis who may need public funding through the Illinois All Kids Program or Medicaid may receive SASS services.

If the child is eligible for SASS services:

- SASS will work with the guardian and child for at least 90 days.
- If the child is hospitalized, SASS will join the hospital team to care for the child.
- SASS will help the hospital team plan for the child's return home and will provide services when the child is home.
- If the child is not hospitalized, SASS will provide mental health services and supports to help the child stay at home.

How Will Families Be Involved in Their Child's Care?

To assure that services in the State of Illinois are both family-driven and youth-guided, families are the primary decision makers for their child's treatment. SASS will work closely with families to learn about the child's problems and strengths and may also request that families/parents/guardians participate in the child's treatment, along with the child. SASS will provide and/or link the child and family to services, resources and supports to address the immediate crisis and begin to assist with building resilience. Parents will be offered the services of a Family Resource Developer (FRD). A FRD is a parent/caregiver who has previously navigated the mental health system successfully for a child who has been diagnosed with a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). Building on their life experiences, they receive additional training to help consumer families engage and navigate through multiple service systems on the child's behalf.

Other Links

<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalProviders/behavioral/sass/Pages/sasshome.aspx>