

**Social and Rehabilitation Announces
Completion of a Study
of the
Use of Mental Health Medications with Children on Medicaid**

November 20, 2009

Social and Rehabilitation Services' Mental Health Program announces the release of a Medicaid focus study entitled "*Prescribing Patterns of Psychotropic Drugs Among Child Medicaid Beneficiaries in the State of Kansas.*" SRS engaged the University of Kansas Office of Child Welfare and Mental Health to do a study of the prescribing patterns of psychotropic medication for children on Medicaid and to consider evidence regarding the safe and effective use of these medications. The study will help guide actions taken by the Medicaid funded community mental health managed care organization, Kansas Health Solutions, as it works with community mental health providers to ensure the safe and effective use of psychotropic medication for all children in Kansas served by Medicaid.

The study found that prescribing practices and the prevalence of the use of psychotropic medication in Kansas is quite similar to other states. In addition, Kansas has a fairly high rate of mental health diagnosis for children receiving psychotropic medications, which is a positive marker for the use of these drugs. The study also found that the time period between when Kansas children were prescribed a psychotropic drug and when they received other community based mental health services was relatively short.

The study's researchers, in consultation with the study's expert Advisory Committee, identified five areas of concern: 1) The use of psychotropic medication in very young children, especially antipsychotics; 2) The use of antipsychotics in children of all ages; 3) Multiple drug use, especially between different classes of drugs; 4) The prevalence rate of psychotropic drug use for children in foster care; and 5) The prescribing patterns of non-mental health specialists.

While cautioning against implementing cost-containment strategies that would further limit access to quality mental health treatment, the study made the following general recommendations to address the concerns found in the study:

- Establish and publish psychotropic medication practice, guidelines, and protocols;
- Publish and disseminate evidence-based practice guidance on the use of psychotropic medications; and
- Monitor the use of psychotropic medications in children in a way that triggers further expert clinical review and guidance lead by a Medical Director who would oversee all prescribing practices for children on Medicaid.