

Finding Your Way: A Guide to Mental Health Support in Erie County, PA

Making Mental Health Help Easier to Understand and Easier to Find

Many parents and caregivers have concerns about their child's behavior, emotions, or development- but figuring out when to seek help, where to turn, and how to get started can feel overwhelming.

That's why we created this guide.

Think of it as your compass- pointing you in the right direction toward local services, supports, and professionals who are here to help children and families thrive in Erie County, Pennsylvania.

You don't need to have all the answers. Whether you're worried about your child's mood, behavior, or development- or just want to better understand what help is available- **this guide is here to walk you through your options in clear, simple steps.**

We know that navigating the mental health system can be confusing, even with a map. That's where **LAUNCH CTRL** comes in: when you're not sure where to start, we're here to help you take the next step.

LAUNCH CTRL, powered by the Achievement Center of LECOM Health, is a centralized triage and referral line, meaning there is a single phone number, email, and online resources that bring together many of the Erie County, PA child- and family-serving supports. Get connected in real time to the right services and resources.

Caring people. Clear Paths. Real help.

Trained coordinators will guide each inquiry-offering brief screenings to best identify the need, direct scheduling with trusted providers, and connections to support.

Spend less time searching and more time getting support





When concerns go unaddressed, they often get harder over time. The sooner support is offered, the more helpful it can be. But navigating the system- and understanding the terms professionals use- can be confusing.

This guide is here to make things easier. You'll find information about:

How children's services work

How children's services work in Erie County, Pennsylvania

Levels of care

What "levels of care" mean and why they matter

Types of services

Types of mental health services available for children and families

Where to go

Where to go for help and how to get connected



Understanding Child Serving Systems

A system is a group that works together, and a child serving system is a group that works together to help children and families. In Erie County, PA there are different kinds of systems that help children and families, and they all work in different ways:

1

Systems that are for everyone

Some systems like education and physical health are made to help all children. That means every child can go to school and see a doctor. Even though these systems are open to everyone, parents still need to take action like enrolling their child in school and making doctor's appointments for check-ups or shots.

2

Systems a person chooses to join

Some systems like Early Intervention, mental health, autism and intellectual disability, and drug and alcohol, are optional. This means that the person gets to decide if they want to use the system. A doctor, teacher, or someone else might suggest these services, but the person has to say yes and take steps to join these systems.

3

Systems that need a referral

Some systems like the legal system/ juvenile probation and the Office of Children and Youth are only used if something serious happens, like breaking the law. A judge or other official has to send or refer the person to these systems- they can't just sign up for them on their own.



What are Levels of Care (LOC)?

In mental health, **"level of care"** means how much support someone gets and where they get it-like at home, in school, in an office, or in a hospital. Higher levels of care mean more frequent help or help is given in more structured settings.

Start low

It's best to start with the lowest level of care that still meets a person's needs. This helps them stay at home and keep up with their everyday routines as much as possible.

Stay flexible

Finding the right level of care is important- not just at the start, but all throughout treatment. As a person's needs change, their care might need to change too.

No one fails

If treatment is not working, it doesn't mean someone failed- it might just mean a different level of care is needed.

- ❏ Keep in mind: levels of care for children, adolescents, and adults can all look a little different and this guide gives a general overview.



Levels of Care at a Glance

Here is a quick overview of the different levels of care and where each one is provided:

Level of Care	Where it is Provided
Crisis Help	At a crisis center, walk-in clinic, or ER
Blended Case Management	At home or in the community
Outpatient	At a therapist's office, clinic, or sometimes at school
Community-based Behavioral Health Treatment	At home, school, or in the community
Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP)	At a hospital or center during the day (home at night)
Residential Treatment	At a treatment center where a child stays full time
Inpatient Hospitalization	At a hospital, 24/7 care during serious mental health needs

Levels of Care Available in Erie County, PA

Crisis Services

Crisis services help people who need immediate support-like if someone is thinking about hurting themselves, someone else, or acting in a way that puts them in danger.

These services are short-term and focus on keeping people safe right away, while helping them get connected to longer-term care.

How to get this help: Anyone can receive this help by connecting with the resources below.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

[Call 988](#) | [Text 988](#)

[Click to connect with their online chat](#)

Crisis Services

[Call 814-456-2014](#)

Or toll free at [1-800-300-9558](#)

Help is also available in person at these locations:

LECOM Medical Center and Behavioral Health Pavilion

5515 Peach Street
Erie, PA 16509

Crisis Center at UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor

2560 W 12th Street
Erie, PA 16505

AHN Saint Vincent Hospital

***ADULTS ONLY**

232 W. 25th Street
Erie, PA 16544



Blended Case Management

Blended Case Management (BCM) is support for children and families who are dealing with serious emotional or mental health challenges and could use help with everyday life.

BCM provides a case manager that works with an individual- and often parents and families- to set goals, build on strengths, and connect the individual with services and resources in the community.

BCM is not the same as therapy, but it can be used alongside therapy if the person needs both emotional support and help with other areas of life.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Any person age 14 or older can refer themselves for BCM. Referrals can also be made by parent(s)/ guardian(s), member(s) of the family, community agencies or service providers, physicians, school staff, etc. by contacting the agency the person would like to work with. This level of care also requires an evaluation from a psychiatrist or psychologist that shows the person has a serious mental illness or emotional disorder, and there are also other rules about who can receive this service. We recommend contacting the agency the person would like to work with to learn more about the requirements.



Outpatient Therapy

Outpatient treatment is for people who are safe to live at home and continue daily routines with only a little bit of support. Outpatient therapy can include one-on-one therapy, family therapy, group therapy, and school-based therapy services. In outpatient therapy the person (or family) usually meets with a therapist once per week for about one hour, but appointments can also be shorter or happen less often. Outpatient can also include psychiatric evaluations and medication management.



One-on-One Therapy

Individual sessions with a therapist, typically once per week for about one hour.



Family Therapy

Sessions that involve the whole family to work through challenges together.



Group Therapy

Therapy sessions with multiple participants, often focused on shared experiences.



School-Based Therapy

Therapy services provided directly at school for added convenience and accessibility.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Any person age 14 or older can refer themselves for Outpatient. Referrals can also be made by parent(s)/ guardian(s), member(s) of the family, community agencies or service providers, physicians, school staff, etc. A referral is made by contacting the agency the person would like to work with.

Community-based Behavioral Health Treatment

Community-based Behavioral Health Treatment is for people who are safe to live at home but need more help than one hour per week. This level of care includes different types of therapy services, like **Intensive Behavioral Health Support (IBHS)** and **Family Based Mental Health (FBMH)**, that are provided to the person while they remain living at home; many of these services can be provided in the home, at daycare, school, or in the community. This level is higher than Outpatient because the services happen more often and there are usually more people involved in the person's treatment.

At Home

Services delivered directly in the family's home environment for comfort and convenience.

At Daycare or School

Support provided in the settings where children spend most of their time.

In the Community

Services offered in community locations that are familiar and accessible to the family.

 **How to get this help:** The services offered at this level of care each have their own requirements.



Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP)

A Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) is for people who need consistent and structured care. PHPs provide **6-8 hours of care several days per week**, but the person receiving treatment is still able to live at home. People in a PHP participate in one-on-one therapy and group therapy and may receive support with their medications from a psychiatrist.

Standard PHP

Some PHPs are available after school, allowing children to attend treatment while maintaining their home routine.

School-Based Partial

Other PHPs happen during the school day and are called "school based partial," which means that the child can participate in special education classes while getting support for their mental health; school districts work closely with the families of the children that receive this service.

- ☐ **How to get this help:** This level of care requires an evaluation from a psychiatrist or psychologist that says a PHP is needed.



Residential Treatment

Residential treatment is for people who need time away from home to stay safe and focus on feeling better. Residential treatment happens in a facility where the person is safe and secure, but they do not have to be individually watched 24 hours a day, and it feels more like being part of a group or community.

While in residential treatment, people participate in one-on-one therapy, group therapy, and often meet with a doctor who helps with medications for their mental health, also called a psychiatrist. This support helps the person gain and practice skills that they can use when they return home so they can stay safe and healthy.

→ **One-on-One Therapy**

Individual sessions with a therapist to work through personal challenges.

→ **Group Therapy**

Sessions with peers to build community and shared coping skills.

→ **Psychiatric Support**

Meetings with a psychiatrist who helps with medications for mental health.

→ **Skill Building**

Gaining and practicing skills to use when returning home to stay safe and healthy.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** To go to residential treatment, a person usually needs a psychiatric evaluation. There also needs to be a meeting with a team (called an Interagency Service Planning Team, or ISPT) to decide if this is the right level of care.



Inpatient Hospitalization

Inpatient hospitalization is for people who are going through a serious mental health crisis and may be unsafe. They could be having serious thoughts about hurting themselves or others, or they might be having a hard time thinking clearly, like feeling very confused, very angry, or hearing or seeing things that are not really there.

Inpatient treatment is called "hospitalization" because it happens in safe, secure, places like hospitals or treatment centers where trained staff can watch and care for the person 24 hours a day. The main goal of inpatient treatment is to keep a person safe and help them start feeling better. Most people stay in an inpatient unit for a short time, usually between **3 to 7 days**. Sometimes, people may need to stay longer if they still need help to stay safe or begin feeling better.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Inpatient hospitalization requires a hospital evaluation (by a doctor or psychiatrist) that says this level of care is needed. Help is available and an evaluation can be completed anytime at any of these locations:

LECOM Medical Center and Behavioral Health Pavilion

5515 Peach Street
Erie, PA 16509

Crisis Center at UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor

2560 W 12th Street
Erie, PA 16505

AHN Saint Vincent Hospital

***ADULTS ONLY**

232 W. 25th Street
Erie, PA 16544



What Types of Services are Available?

In mental health treatment, a **service** is the type of help a person gets. There are different types of services for different needs and because of that, each service has its own requirements or rules about who can receive the service.

Getting familiar with the many mental health services available in Erie County, PA can help you decide which is the right support for your child and family.

 Remember, no one needs to take this journey on their own. LAUNCH CTRL can help.



Early Intervention (EI)

Children from **0-5 years old** who have special needs due to developmental delays and disabilities are eligible to receive Early Intervention (EI) to enhance cognitive, behavioral, and social development. These free services support the mental health and behavioral needs of children 0-5 but they can also include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language, and specialized instruction to focus on education and behavior.

EI services take place during the child's normal daily activities and can happen in places the child already knows, like your home, daycare, preschool, Head Start, or playgroup. This helps the child learn and practice new skills in real life, with the people and places they see every day.

📄 **How to get this help:** Contact the Pennsylvania Early Intervention CONNECT line.

Call

[1-800-692-7288](tel:1-800-692-7288)

Email

help@connectpa.net

Online Form

[Submit this online form](#)

Once a referral is received it is sent to the organization that coordinates services. For children 0-3 years old in Erie County, PA, this organization is **Erie County Care Management (ECCM)**. ECCM assigns the family a Service Coordinator. This person will help set up an assessment to see if the child can get Early Intervention (EI) services. If the child qualifies, the Service Coordinator will work with the family to make a plan called an **IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)**. This plan explains what services are available and helps the family choose the best provider. Once they choose a provider, the Service Coordinator will let them know, and services will start within **14 days**. For children 3-5 years old, services are coordinated by Northwest Tri-County IU5.



Blended Case Management

Blended Case Management (BCM) services are provided by a case manager that helps to make life easier for people with a serious mental illness or emotional disorder. The case manager will help find the right doctors, therapists, and programs. They also help connect families to food, housing, jobs, and healthcare. A case manager can even talk to schools to help with special learning needs if the person needs more support. BCM services include **24/7 crisis support** so someone can help if the person is having a mental health emergency.



Medical Connections

Help finding the right doctors, therapists, and programs.



Community Resources

Connections to food, housing, jobs, and healthcare.



School Support

Advocacy with schools to help with special learning needs.



24/7 Crisis Support

Around-the-clock help available for mental health emergencies.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Any adolescent, 14 years of age or older, can refer themselves for BCM services. Referrals can also be made by parent(s)/ guardian(s), member(s) of the family, community agencies or service providers, physicians, school staff, etc. A referral is made by contacting the agency the person would like to work with. However, there are guidelines about who can receive BCM services.

Family-Based Mental Health

Family Based Mental Health (FBMH) provides a special mix of therapy and support services to families with children, and adolescents who are having a hard time with big emotional and/or behavioral concerns.

In FBMH services are provided by a team of two mental health workers that focus on the family's strengths. This service is an "in-home" service, meaning the team usually meets with the family in the family's home or other community setting.

Duration

FBMH typically lasts **32 weeks**

Frequency

At least **2-3 sessions per week**

Crisis Support

24/7 crisis support available for emergencies between sessions

FBMH also includes a case manager who helps the family by working with other programs or services in the family's life to speak up for what the family needs and make sure everyone is working together. The goal of FBMH is to help parents feel confident and supported while keeping children in their home and out of the hospital or placement.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Children, and adolescents can be referred to Family Based Mental Health by their parent(s)/ guardian(s), psychiatrist, mental health professional, and school staff. However, there are guidelines about who can receive FBMH services.



Intensive Behavioral Health Support (IBHS)

IBHS services provide support for children and their families who are experiencing difficulties in their daily lives. Services are short-term, intensive mental health interventions that address a child's behavior and mental health needs in every setting, including school, home and the community.

IBHS has three (3) categories of service:

1

Individual Services

Services provided to one child to reduce and manage the child's needs. These services help increase coping strategies and support skill development to promote positive behaviors.

2

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

A specific behavioral approach to services for a child. ABA services explore why a behavior occurs and then uses specific interventions to address behavior.

3

Group Services

Provided to multiple children at a specific place.

- ❏ **How to get this help:** Requires a written order completed by an Ordering, Referring, and Prescribing (ORP) professional that says the person has a need for the service.

Parent Education and Early Childhood Prevention

Parent education and early childhood prevention services are available to help parents in many ways.

These services might:

- Offer support and education to address issues and make parenting easier and more enjoyable.
- Teach important things like how children grow, understand their emotions, and communicate well.
- Promote positive parenting practices such as using positive language, planned discipline, and family routines.
- Strengthen families by providing relevant, effective education and support.
- Encourage an optimal environment for the healthy growth and development of children and parents.

📄 **How to get this help:** Parents/ Caregivers can sign-up for online education, connect with a local agency like [Erie Family Center](#), or check out the [resources available](#) on the Project LAUNCH website.

Where to Find Resources in Erie County, PA

Erie County, PA is fortunate to have so many mental health resources available for children and families but knowing where to find them can be a challenge. Thankfully, there are already a few guides and services available to make it easier!

Erie County Care Management (ECCM)

Expert care management connecting individuals and families to community services.

2-1-1

Free, 24/7 resource navigation service connecting you to social services in Erie County.

Erie County Resource Guide

A comprehensive, color-coded guide to services and supports for Erie County residents.



Erie County Care Management (ECCM)

Expert Community Care Management (known as **Erie County Care Management or ECCM** in Erie County, PA) has a primary focus to promote the integration of community services into a seamless system of care for any child or adult in need of services.

Care management is the process of customizing services to fit an individual's specific needs. ECCM has five main care management services in which they provide knowledgeable service and supports coordinators to help you, and your family find resources within the community.

Those five care management services address:

1. [Intellectual disabilities](#)
2. [Behavioral health](#)
3. [Early intervention](#)
4. [Health choices](#)
5. [Autism spectrum disorder](#)

Connect with ECCM

Call [814-528-0600](tel:814-528-0600)

or visit <https://www.eccm.org>



2-1-1

211 is funded and provided **free of charge** to users in Erie County, PA through the United Way of Erie County. Frequently referred to as the *"social service equivalent of 911,"* people in need of information can reach a trained, professional resource navigator **24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**. Resource navigators listen to users' concerns and provide information on appropriate organizations that can assist with their needs.

You can connect with a 211 resource navigator by:



Just dial **211**



Send your zip code to **898-211**



<https://northwest.pa211.org/>

As the most comprehensive source of social services information in the region, 211 takes the guesswork out of finding services through a quick and confidential call, text, or chat.

The broad request categories for 211 include:

- Housing & Shelter
- Food
- Utilities
- Healthcare
- Mental Health & Addictions
- Employment & Income
- Clothing & Household
- Childcare & Parenting
- Government & Legal
- Transportation Assistance
- Education
- Disaster
- Wide-ranging "Other" category



The Erie County Resource Guide of Services & Supports

This guide comprehensively identifies services and supports for Erie County, PA residents enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA), although many of these programs may also serve residents without MA. If you are unsure if the services listed in the guide are available to you, there is contact information provided to call and ask a representative. There is also contact information provided for you if you are in need of behavioral health services but do not have Medical Assistance.

The guide is color coded by category:

Red	Drug and Alcohol
Orange	Early Intervention
Green	Housing
Purple	Intellectual and Developmental Differences
Blue/Grey	Mental Health
Teal	Other

In each category you'll find the types of services available, a brief description of the service, and providers in the county (with clickable links) that provide the service.

The guide also includes a list of agencies in alphabetical order, with the address, contact number, website, and list of services they each provide.

 [Click to Download the Erie County Resource Guide of Services & Supports](#)



Whether you're worried or just have questions- LAUNCH CTRL helps you find the right help, right now.



814-860-8765



help@erielaunch.org



www.erielaunch.org

