Legislative Auditor’s Conclusion:

Providers were satisfied with consultation lines, which they said have improved patient access to mental and behavioral health care.

The referral service has helped families find outpatient care but has struggled to meet timeliness goals and achieve statewide participation.
JLARC to evaluate four consultation and referral lines for mental and behavioral health

*(SHB 2728, 2020)*

Seattle Children’s and University of Washington operate the lines under contract with the Health Care Authority.

Combined, the lines have cost $12.9 million. *(fiscal years 2020 through 2022).*
3 consultation lines for providers
Allow providers to discuss patients’ condition with consulting psychiatrist.

1 referral service for families
Mental Health Referral Service provides a list of outpatient mental or behavioral health providers.
Presentation Overview

Provider consultation line satisfaction

Family referral service satisfaction, timeliness, and use
Three consultation lines for providers who treat different patient groups

Psychiatrists answer questions about diagnoses, medication, treatment, and other topics. UW and Children’s offer care guides, newsletters, and conferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychiatry Consultation Line (PCL)</th>
<th>Perinatal PCL</th>
<th>Partnership Access Line (PAL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults (18+ years old)</td>
<td>Pregnant or postpartum (any age)</td>
<td>Children and adolescents (0-19 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/7</td>
<td>9am-5pm, M-F</td>
<td>8am-5pm, M-F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UW and Seattle Children’s Consultation and Referral Lines for Mental and Behavioral Health
Provider consultation line calls have increased since 2019

Lines were used statewide.
293 providers gave feedback to JLARC

There was statewide representation.
Providers overwhelmingly satisfied

Excellent and evidence-based
Providers would use the service again and recommend to their colleagues.

Reliable and timely
Providers able to give dependable, same-day care to their patients.

Helps diagnose & treat
Some providers unable to provide care without the consulting line.
Providers say lines increase access to care

Providers also said there is no resource equivalent to the consultation lines.

**Fills gaps in system**
Some areas in WA have few psychiatrists and lines help bridge the gap.

**Overcomes barriers**
Lines reduce time to receive treatment, and reduce other barriers.

**Educates providers**
Information received helped treat current and future patients.
Presentation Overview

Provider consultation line satisfaction

Family referral service satisfaction, timeliness, and use
Mental Health Referral Service helps families find outpatient providers for minors

Operated by Seattle Children’s
8am – 5pm, M-F
6,700+ families since 2019
Referral process has five steps

- Contact referral service
- Schedule referral appointment
- Meet with referral specialist
- Receive list of providers
- Respond to follow up call
Families surveyed were generally satisfied with referral process

JLARC surveyed 1,607 families who used the referral service in 2021.

- 73% satisfied with operating hours
- 80% satisfied with discussion
- 77% satisfied with discussion
- 73% agree list is consistent with request
- 82% satisfied with call

No significant differences in satisfaction based on race, language, or location.
Fewer families agree the service helped them access care

62% of families surveyed who received a letter agreed the service helped them access care.

Some families may face additional barriers and don’t make an appointment with a provider.
Less than half of families surveyed were satisfied with timeliness

Families unsatisfied with time to speak with staff or receive a referral list.

- **48%** satisfied with time to receive call back
- **26%** satisfied with time from call to referral appointment
- **32%** satisfied with time to receive list

Contact referral service
Schedule referral appointment
Meet with referral specialist
Receive list of providers
Referral line has rarely met statutory goal to send list of providers in 7 days

Children’s cites rising demand, staffing shortages, and provider availability.

Statutory goal met in seven of 38 months
Some families receive referral lists more quickly than others

Wait time is shorter for Medicaid participants.
- Medicaid: 9 weekdays avg.
- Private insurance: 19 weekdays avg.

Callers with African American or Hispanic children received letters more quickly than callers for white or Asian children.
Almost all referral service families are from Western WA

Unclear why families in Eastern Washington are underrepresented.

Referral service participants: 97%

All Washington children: 76%
Legislative Auditor’s Recommendation

HCA and Children's should:

• Develop a plan to meet statutory and contractual timeliness requirements.

• Investigate disproportionately low participation in the referral service from Eastern Washington families.
Next Steps

Proposed Final Report
November 2022

View the full report: www.leg.wa.gov/jlarc

Video Summary
One Page Overview
PDF Version
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