

PROJECT SAFE PATHWAYS:

Behavioral Health for Students with IDD in State Custody



The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Treatment & Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (VKC-TRIAD) has established Project Safe Pathways: Behavioral Health for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in State Custody with funding awarded by the State of Tennessee's Department of Disability and Aging. This project is funded under a Grant Contract with the State of Tennessee. This pilot project seeks to improve educational access and quality of life for 40 school-aged children and adolescents 1) who have a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability, Developmental Disability (such as Autism), and/or Intellectual Developmental Disorder; 2) who are living in Department of Children Services (DCS) custody or are at high risk for such a placement; and 3) for whom behavior has impacted safety, educational access, stable housing, or access to healthcare. Project Safe Pathways (PSP)'s goals are primarily to identify and address behavior-related barriers to school engagement and quality of life. PSP personnel will individualize processes of root cause analysis, behavioral assessment and intervention, interdisciplinary collaboration, caregiver partnership, and capacity-building for care providers in the school, home, community, and health care environments.

When chronic episodes of dangerous behavior result in crisis responses, school removals or exclusionary discipline, reduced access to school and neurotypical peers, or changes of home placement, PSP will strive to reduce the severity and frequency of such incidents. When PSP identifies insufficient access to healthcare for physical, mental, or behavioral health needs that are relevant to the aims above, our team will strive to identify and articulate those needs, share beneficial data to potential providers, guardians, and caregivers, and to support the identification and intake of patients into appropriate healthcare services.

This project will include several unique features listed below:

- Using a blend of consultation, coaching, and direct assistance to overcome barriers that are systemic and may be beyond the existing resources available locally
- Fostering unique and robust partnerships across caregivers, educators, and related service providers, especially in the domains of physical, mental, and behavioral health
- Building the capacity of diverse caregivers including direct service providers, foster families, and personnel across the DCS system
- Approaching important issues including educational and healthcare access that are pervasive and chronically below expectations with the potential to learn more about the issues at hand and test actionable solutions for these issues in the hopes of planning future action at a broader or more robust scale

Eligibility for enrollment

Youth participating in the program must be living in state custody or at risk for being placed in foster care and have:

- a diagnosis of intellectual or developmental disability or evidence that a formal evaluation/assessment process is underway,
- documented recent behavioral health needs including aggression, self-injury, or elopement,
- consent to participate from guardian, including agreement to share records and allow for in-person and virtual contact, and
- agreements to participate from care providers in the contexts where support is needed (home, school, community).

Project Safe Pathways and partnerships

PSP relies on strong partnerships with all the following when applicable:

- Individuals providing in-home care- Foster parent, birth parent, adoptive parent, foster care provider
- Community-based service and care providers- case workers, medical providers, related service providers, educators from the local education agency
- State-based or -funded agencies and programs- TN Strong Families, Tennessee START Assessment & Stabilization Teams, Center of Excellence for Children in Custody, Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CHANT)

Project Safe Pathways and behavioral health services and supports

- PSP is not designed to displace or supplant services to which youth would be entitled to receive via insurance or participation in a free, appropriate public education. PSP will work to recruit, coordinate with, and empower appropriate insurance-covered Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) or counseling services.

To submit a general question or complete the intake request, please go to:

<https://redcap.link/safepathwaysintake> or scan the QR code below. After you submit the form, a member of our team will contact you within 2 business days.

