HB 422: Children's Mental Health Outcomes
Database Options
Prepared for the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee
by Sue O'Connell, Research Analyst
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Background
House Bill 422 requires the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee to propose a pilot project for improving and tracking children's mental health outcomes. The committee decided in January to focus on outcomes related to whether a child is at home, in school, and out of trouble after receiving mental health services. But in March, the committee learned that the Children's Mental Health Bureau does not have a database that could be used to collect information on those outcomes.

This briefing paper provides a general overview of some state and private systems that collect data related to outcomes.

OMIS: The Offender Management Information System
The Department of Corrections has developed the Offender Management Information System (OMIS), which contains information on people who have been sentenced to a correctional facility or to the department's custody. Both DOC employees and community corrections providers can enter and view information about an offender. However, the system also contains security features to limit who may enter, change, or view certain types of information.

Some OMIS information is similar to data the committee has talked about for the HB 422 study, including data on an offender's:

- housing and placement history;

- education status;

- criminal offenses;

- drug and alcohol test results; and

- results of questionnaires that assess the results of treatment.

The system can generate a variety of reports and forms, including offender-specific reports, caseload reports, assessments, and case plans.

The department will share the OMIS technology with other state agencies. Currently, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is using it to replace the Child and Family Services Division case management database. The state Information Technology Services Division is modifying OMIS for DPHHS at a cost of $1.16 million. The revisions are expected to take about 11,000 hours of programming time at a cost of $103 per hour.

JCATS: The Juvenile Court Assessment and Tracking System
The Office of the Court Administrator created a database in 2005 to track outcomes for justice-involved youth. Data fields in the Juvenile Court Assessment and Tracking System (JCATS) that are similar to the information identified for HB 422 include a youth's:

- housing and placement history;

- school status;

- mental health diagnoses and services;

- drug and alcohol test resuls; and

- results of questionnaires used for assessment.

Only youth court staff are allowed to enter information into the system. JCATS can create both individualized reports and reports specific to the type of service or placement being used.

Current law may prevent the office from using JCATS to track children in the HB 422 pilot project. Those concerns could be addressed in a variety of ways, including changes to the law, sharing of technology, or cross-checking of data.

Eleanor: Mental Health Recovery Markers
The DPHHS Addictive and Mental Disorders Division uses an online database to collect federally required information on adults in the mental health system. Providers enter or upload the information online. Nicknamed "Eleanor," the database includes information on:

- where people are living;

- whether they're employed; and

- whether they're abusing drugs or alcohol.

Development of the database has taken about 2,300 hours to date, for a cost of about $150,000 at the average in-house programming rate of $65 per hour.

Private Vendors
Private firms also collect and analyze data, including two firms known to Montana providers.

NAMI Montana worked on a contract with NetReflector in 2011 to collect children's mental health data through an online survey. The contract included an initial set-up fee of $17,500 and ongoing costs of $1,500 every three months. NAMI stopped the project after learning DPHHS was planning to use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS).

Behavioral Pathways System, a company owned by Netsmart, has online surveys that can measure and analyze aggregate data on different levels of mental health care and a variety of mental health outcomes, including the housing, education, and juvenile justice status of youth. Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch has contracted in the past with BPS for outcome measurement and quality assurance.