

## In The House with a Child with Mental Health Issues

This post is a little different from the other posts on this blog. Those posts focused on people who have divorced, are in the midst of a divorce or contemplating one. This post focuses on parents who may or may not live in separate households. This post is for parents of a child who has a mental health issue or diagnosis.

You know who you are. You have a child about 15 or 16 years old who has been acting out for the last few months or even years. You know just about every acronym in the child welfare world; IEP, MH/IDD, CYF, AD/HD, RAD, ODD, you know them all.

The schools are closed for weeks because of coronavirus, and your child's in-home services have been cut back to the bare minimum. You are pretty much alone with your child 24/7, but those cute kids on the television news building Lego cities and baking cookies are not what you are experiencing. The flare-ups are moving toward explosions and happening with greater frequency. Your child is frustrated with the situation and so are you. So what are your options?

First of all, keep your cool. The last thing you or your child need is a child abuse investigation or you getting hurt in an altercation with your child. Second, every release or update I have seen from the Human Services Departments in the Philadelphia area indicates that emergency services are still available. If you feel that your usual service provider has cut your services to the point where your child is in danger, call your local Department of Children, Youth and Families. In any mental health emergency, call your county's crisis intervention hotline. In Montgomery County, the number is 1-855-634-HOPE (4673); 610-278-3270 in Chester County; 1-855-889-7827 in Delaware County; 1-800-499-7455 in Bucks County; and Philadelphia, 215-685-6440.

Obviously, I am not in your house when the incidents occur so I cannot tell you the level of emergency, but as a last resort, there is always 911. Having the police come to your house is probably a bad precedent to set. Still, they do have the ability to initiate an involuntary mental health commitment, arrest and remove a juvenile if a crime has been committed, and maybe their mere arrival at your house will scare the out-of-control child into calming down.

Unfortunately, there are not any perfect answers in these situations, but you are not alone. There are people out there who can help. From a legal perspective, if you are facing these issues, I would be happy to discuss your situation with you.