
Aspiranet

~ April 2022 ~

Monthly Training

Psychotropic Medication

As part of a child or youth's therapeutic services, some may also benefit from being prescribed psychotropic medication to address diagnosed mental and behavioral health issues. There is important information to know and factors to consider regarding to a child or youth being prescribed medication, as outlined below.

What are Psychotropic Medications?

- Psychotropic medications are a specific group of medication prescribed to manage psychiatric and mental health disorders or conditions.
- They are intended to help control symptoms and behaviors related to mental health conditions that impact a child or youth's functioning.

Common conditions that psychotropic medications are prescribed include but are not limited to:

- **Mood Disorders** (depression, bi-polar disorder)
- **Anxiety Disorders** (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder)
- **Attention-Deficit and Disruptive Behavior Disorders** (ADHD, conduct disorder)
- **Thought Disorders** (Schizophrenia)

Psychotropic Medications & Foster Care

Use of psychotropic medications for children and youth in foster care is an important topic in child welfare today, as it is known these children and youth are often prescribed psychotropic medications much more frequently than children not in foster care.

While many children youth in foster care do in fact need psychotropic medications, not all children and youth do. It is vital that a thorough evaluation and diagnosis of children/youth occur prior to a psychotropic medication being prescribed, to ensure that the appropriate medication is prescribed, and only when needed.

Benefits & Risks of Psychotropic Medications

- When prescribed and used correctly, psychotropic drugs can be very helpful because untreated mental health problems can have serious outcomes for children and youth, such as becoming a danger to themselves or others.
- When behavioral challenges are rooted in mental health issues and behavioral disorders, it can be very difficult for the child/youth to regulate their behavior and mood, and medication along with other interventions, such as therapy, support counselor services, etc. can be helpful.

Examples of when psychotropic medication can be beneficial include:

- For a diagnosis of depression or PTSD, medication can help children and youth to better regulate their emotions and enable them to better participate in everyday activities, as well as therapeutic services.
- For a diagnosis of disruptive behavior disorders, such as ADHD or conduct disorder, medication can help them to stay focused and more attentive in school or manage impulsivity or aggressive outbursts.

NOTE: Psychotropic medication is most useful when combined with other therapeutic services, such as therapy, Wraparound, etc.

Possible Side Effects

- As with any medication, psychotropic medications can include side effects that must be monitored and reported to the prescribing doctor as soon as possible.
- Side effects will vary depending on the type of psychotropic medication prescribed, and may include but are not limited to:
 - Changes in appetite; weight gain or loss
 - Drowsiness
 - Agitation; irritability
 - Withdrawn behavior
 - Changes in sleep patterns
 - Increased anxiety or suicidal thoughts
 - Longer term effects, such as involuntary muscle movement, etc.

What Resource Parents Need to Know About Psychotropic Medication

Court Authorization **Required** for Psychotropic Medication

- For minor child or youth in foster care, any prescribed Psychotropic Medication must be approved through a **court order in order for a child to receive the medication**.
- The prescribing doctor submits required documentation to the court for review.
- The court approval/court order is required *prior* to a child being given any psychotropic medication. Therefore, even if the doctor has provided a prescription for the medication, until the Aspiranet Social Worker informs the Resource Parent that the court order has been received, the child cannot be administered any psychotropic medication.
- A new court order must be issued if the child's doctor changes a psychotropic medication or there are changes to the dosage of a currently prescribed psychotropic medication that is outside the dosage range listed on the court order.

NOTE: For young adults, 18 and over, in foster care, they consent for their own medications, and therefore, a court order is not required for them for begin using a psychotropic medication.

As the primary caregiver for a foster child, it is important to know and ask the prescribing doctor the following:

- What is child/youth's diagnosis?
- What is the name of medication being prescribed? What is it for?
- How will the medication help/impact the child/youth (behavior, mood, appetite, sleep, etc.)?
- What are the possible side effects of the medication?
- Are there any possible interactions with other medications, food, or beverages?
- What type of regular monitoring by the doctor will be required? How frequently will appointments be scheduled? (some medications also require regular blood test, etc.)
- What is protocol for reaching doctor after hours for concerns/side effects, etc.?

It is also important for Resource Parents to explore your own feelings and/or any possible biases about psychotropic medication. If the Child & Family Team recommends a child for an evaluation for medication, it is important that if it is determined medication will be prescribed, that any concerns you may have are discussed with the prescribing doctor and your Aspiranet Social Worker, and do not have a negative impact for the child in your care or the regular administration of the medication.

Responsibility for Administering Psychotropic Medications

- As a Resource Parent, one of the most significant responsibilities is administration of medication.
- It is very important to administer medication to children/youth as *prescribed by the doctor*.
- If there are concerns related to the medication such as side effects, *always* contact a medical professional *prior* to stopping or changing the administration of any psychotropic medication. A doctor's order is required to stop any medication, and in the case of psychotropic medication it may require a new court order.
- Administration of all medication, including psychotropic medication must be provided as prescribed and each dose documented on a Medication Log as it is administered. For your protection and as well as the child's, please be consistent in documenting administration of medication at the time it is provided to the child.

In addition to notifying the prescribing doctor, please notify your Aspiranet Social Worker or the On Call Social Worker if any urgent concerns arise related to a child's or young adult's medications.

My signature below indicates that I have completed the April 2022 training “Psychotropic Medication”.

Signature Foster Parent #1

Date

Print Name Foster Parent #1

Signature Foster Parent #2

Date

Print Name Foster Parent #2

Aspiranet Authorized Signature

Date

Training credit: ____ minutes