

OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
 Children's System Advisory Committee
ISSUE BRIEF

Submitted by Ron Sipress, May 2006; Revised July 2006

Issue	Genes plus environment are important in brain development. In addition, what we put into our children's bodies has a dramatic effect on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Nutrition is a vital factor that influences the health of the brain.
Background	Changing methods of farming have introduced higher levels and different types of fat and chemicals into our diet. There are 350 different pesticides used in conventional farming. Many packaged and processed food products are nutritionally inferior to less processed and whole foods. Processed foods tend to be high in calories, fat, salt, sugars, and/or chemicals. There are 4,500 different chemical compounds used as additives to stimulate different tastes and prolong shelf life.
Policy Discussion	The treatment implications of research into nutrition, supplements, and mental health have rarely been acknowledged by mainstream medicine, and yet the potential returns are enormous. Nutritional issues fully involve considerations, practices and principles of family-driven care, physical health, and cultural competency.
Recommendation/Rationale	<p>The CSAC Committee recommends that OMHAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote integration of mental health with primary care; • Pursue opportunities to encourage providers to offer education to clients and family members regarding nutrition, listen to and incorporate dietary and nutritional wishes of parents and clients; and be open to non-Western ideas regarding nutrition and mental health; • Pursue training and workforce development on efforts to understand the role of nutrition regarding children's mental health; • Pursue establishing nutritional counseling as a covered service; • Study and take action regarding the interaction of psychotropic medication and the metabolic system; • Link with the Department of Education to establish more consistent nutritional approaches across systems.