

OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Children's System Advisory Committee

ISSUE BRIEF

Submitted by Ron Sipress, May 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 action. 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, sugar 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 children's 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	The committee recommends that AMH: <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, and to listen to and incorporate dietary and nutritional wishes of parents and clients; Pursue training and workforce development on the interaction of nutrition and mental health and the importance of family choice in nutritional planning▪ Link with the Department of Education to establish more consistent nutritional approaches across systems▪ Promote exercise with nutrition to exponentially increase the benefits to mental health.