

## What is a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)?

Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) is an identification for children who have a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder which substantially interferes with or limits the child's ability to function in family, school, or community activities. It may identify higher needs and help AHCCCS match services to the member's specific needs. There is a standard process for SED identification.



## What are the criteria?

In order to receive an SED determination a child must:

- Be under age 18 years old,
- Have a qualifying diagnosis, and
- Have serious impairment due to the symptoms of their diagnosis or be at risk of deterioration if adequate supports and services are not provided (measured by a CALOCUS score of 2 – 6).

## What is the benefit of an SED identification?

Children with an SED identification qualify for all AHCCCS-covered behavioral and physical health services, as well as a higher level of care to include additional services based on their needs. These may include crisis intervention services, Traditional Healing Services, Auricular Acupuncture, or room and board when a Behavioral Health Residential Facility admission is medically necessary. Members with an SED identification may receive services through the Mental Health Block Grant even if they are not eligible for Medicaid coverage (for example, over income covered under other insurance, or have no insurance coverage). A member has the right to discuss with their provider which services best fit their needs.

## What to expect during the designation process?

The parent/guardian, known as the Health Care Decision Maker (HCDM), may call their child's primary care provider (PCP), their established behavioral health provider, their health plan (AHCCCS or commercial/private insurer), or the child's school to request an SED identification. If the child is uninsured/underinsured, the HCDM can contact the local [AHCCCS Complete Care-Regional Behavioral Health Agreement](#) (ACC-RBHAs) and request an evaluation appointment. The HCDM and their child will meet with a qualified clinician within seven days of request. Once the evaluation is completed, the provider will send the required information to AHCCCS to update the AHCCCS system and communicate identification to the individual's Managed Care Organization, the Tribal Regional Health Authority (TRBHA), Tribal Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS), and/or the AHCCCS Complete Care-Regional Behavioral Health Agreement (ACC-RBHA). The member's provider will be able to review the updated Behavioral Health Category within the AHCCCS online portal for SED identification in order to communicate it to the child or adolescent and their Health Care Decision Maker (HCDM).

## Will an SED identification automatically become a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) determination when a child turns 18 years old?

An SED identification does not automatically become an SMI determination when a child turns 18 years old. A child is eligible to receive an SMI determination at age 17 years and six months of age. The requirements for the SED identification and SMI determinations are separate and different and as such, each individual member must receive separate SED identification and SMI determinations.

More information can be found in the [SED Determination FAQs](#) document.

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is committed to ensuring the availability of timely, quality health care. If you know of an AHCCCS member who is unable to access health services, or if you have a concern about the quality of care, please call your AHCCCS health care plan's Member Services number. If your concern is not resolved, please call AHCCCS Clinical Resolution Unit at 602-364-4558, or 1-800-867-5308.