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Q1: What is an SED identification and what does it mean to be SED identified?

A1: An SED identification qualifies a child for additional funding through the Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) if they are uninsured or underinsured. An SED identification itself is not a diagnosis. To be identified, a child must have a qualifying diagnosis and exhibit functional impairment.

Q2: How is a child or adolescent identified with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)?

A2: **Effective March 28, 2025**, to be eligible for an SED identification, a child or adolescent under the age of 18 must have a qualifying diagnosis and functional impairment caused by the qualifying diagnosis. The identification process will include the following steps:

1. A qualified clinician completes a comprehensive assessment no later than seven business days after a request for SED identification is made, unless there is a current (within the previous six months old) assessment that supports the qualifying diagnosis and functional impairment.
 - i. Refer to the [AHCCCS Medical Coding Resources](#) page on the AHCCCS website for a list of qualifying diagnoses.
2. The qualified clinician completes a Child and Adolescent Level of Care Utilization System (CALOCUS) assessment tool (only levels of care 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 qualify as SED) to indicate functional impairment. **Note: The CALOCUS tool is not required for children aged 5 and under OR FFS members. Please use '99' in these instances.**
3. The qualified clinician completes an [Serious Emotional Disturbance \(SED\) Identification/Removal of Identification Request Form](#) which includes the following required information: **AHCCCS ID / FIRST AND**

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LAST NAME OF CHILD OR ADOLESCENT / DOB / QUALIFYING DIAGNOSIS / CALOCUS SCORE (or 99) / DATE OF IDENTIFICATION / CURRENT HEALTH PLAN / ENROLLMENT DATE.

- a. If the member does not have any enrollment open with AHCCCS, the provider must submit the appropriate information to the ACC-RBHA to have a state-only enrollment sent to AHCCCS to update the system prior to submission of an SED Identification/Removal of Identification Request Form.
 - b. If any of the above information is missing, the child or adolescent will not be identified as SED.
4. AHCCCS will update the Behavioral Health Category 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 Web AHCCCS Verification & Eligibility Site for SED identification in order to communicate it to the child or adolescent and their Health Care Decision Maker (HCDM).
5. For further questions, send an email to SEDidentifications@azahcccs.gov.

Q3: How and why did SED identification process abruptly change effective March 28, 2025?

A3: Beginning October 1, 2023, AHCCCS started a pilot project by which children and adolescents were determined SED similar to how adults are determined as Serious Mental Illness (SMI) throughout Arizona. AHCCCS contracted the SED eligibility determination process to a third-party entity, Solari. This pilot project was funded with Mental Health Block Grant ARPA dollars. AHCCCS was already planning to transition identification of SED by providers without a third-party beginning October 1, 2025, however, the immediate discontinuation of ARPA funding required AHCCCS to expediate the effective date of this change. Therefore, effective March 28, 2025, providers shall submit to AHCCCS information to have a change in Behavioral Health category to be eligible for [Mental Health Block Grant](#) (MHBG) SED federal funding for allowable medically necessary services, as funding is available. Please find additional information related to covered services outlined in [AMPM Exhibit 300-2B](#).

Q4: How are functional limitations assessed as a component of the SED identification process?

A4: To meet the SED functional impairment criteria, a child or adolescent must have a qualifying SED diagnosis and Child and Adolescent Level of Care Utilization System (CALOCUS) level of care score of 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. The CALOCUS assessment tool is not validated for children ages 5 and under. The CALOCUS is recommended but not required for

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FFS members. For children age 5 and under and FFS member without a CALOCUS score, please use 99. More information related to CALOCUS is outlined in [CALOCUS FAQs](#).

Please note: Although AHCCCS does not require submission of the comprehensive assessment and/or CALOCUS, both are subject to review in the Behavioral Health Clinical Chart Audit to ensure functional impairment criteria are clearly documented.

Q5: How is CALOCUS utilized for TRBHAs and Tribal ALTCS programs?

A5: The Tribal ALTCS and TRBHA programs that choose to use AHCCCS to render SED Identifications on their behalf may use the CALOCUS (or other assessment, as approved by AHCCCS) as part of the SED assessment to assess functional limitations. Tribal ALTCS and TRBHAs are not required to use the CALOCUS.

Q6: Does anything change for children and adolescents currently identified as SED with AHCCCS?

A6: No. All children currently identified as SED in the AHCCCS system will remain SED.

Q7: Who will provide Technical Assistance?

A7: AHCCCS will regularly conduct technical assistance to support education regarding performing the SED Identification process. AHCCCS health plans will also be available to address any questions and/or provide technical assistance to members and providers as needed. Please feel free to email questions to systemofcare@azahcccs.gov

Q8: How can a child receive an SED identification?

A8: The parent/guardian (e.g., Health Care Decision Maker known as HCDM) may call their primary care provider (PCP), their established behavioral health provider, their health plan (AHCCCS or commercial/private insurer), or their school to request an SED identification. If the child is uninsured/underinsured, the HCDM can contact the local ACC-RBHA.

Uninsured and underinsured children may receive behavioral health services that are paid by AHCCCS under the [MHBG](#) and the [Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Block Grant](#) (SUBG). The use of the block grants is dependent upon available funding.

Please note: If a child or adolescent is uninsured or underinsured, the Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) SED funding may be billed to the ACC-RBHA for the comprehensive assessment and CALOCUS (if applicable) regardless of whether or not the qualified clinician's assessment ultimately identifies the person as SED. Providers would need to be contracted with the ACC-RBHA for the use of MHBG.

Q9: Can a school make a referral for a student to receive an SED identification?

A9: A school can make a referral for behavioral health services and the behavioral health provider may complete an assessment and send the required information to AHCCCS to make an SED identification. For more information about behavioral health in schools, go to [Accessing Behavioral Health Services in Schools](#).

Q10: How long will the SED identification take?

A10: AHCCCS has committed to make the SED identification updated within the AHCCCS system as requests are received within three business days. Providers can review the BH Category change via [AHCCCS Online](#) If the child had a

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confirmed open enrollment with an AHCCCS ID at the time of the SED identification request and there is no Behavioral Health code change after three business days, the child did not meet the criteria (either a CALOCUS score below 2 or not having a qualifying diagnosis). For more information related to AHCCCS Online, visit the [AHCCCS Online training materials](#) for resources and support.

Q11: Will an SED identification automatically become an SMI determination when a child turns 18 years old?

A11: 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.

Q12: What if a child does not want an SED identification anymore (removal of SED identification process)?

A12: An SED identification will remain in place unless the parent/guardian (e.g., Health Care Decision Maker [HCDM]) requests to have it removed. The person requesting removal could be the HCDM for the child with an SED identification or a member of the child's clinical team. If the HCDM does not agree with an SED identification, the HCDM can ask for an assessment to see whether the child still meets criteria for an SED identification. When a removal of identification is requested, the qualified clinician completes an [Serious Emotional Disturbance \(SED\) Identification/Removal of Identification Request Form](#) which includes the following required information: **AHCCCS ID / FIRST AND LAST NAME OF CHILD OR ADOLESCENT / DOB / QUALIFYING DIAGNOSIS / CALOCUS SCORE (or 99) / Removal Date / DATE OF IDENTIFICATION / CURRENT HEALTH PLAN / ENROLLMENT DATE.**

This will result in a change to the child's behavioral health category from Serious Emotional Disturbance to General Mental Health. Removal of the SED identification will mean that the child will no longer be able to access SED funding through MHBG. HCDMs and providers can outreach AHCCCS health plans for results of removal of identification and to address any questions and/or provide technical assistance to members, HCDMs, and providers as needed regarding the removal of the SED identification process.