

Excerpt

Children's Intensive Case Management

What is Children's Intensive Case Management (ICM)?

The name is a mouthful, but the program is a **lifesaver for kids with mental health issues and their families**. Many of these children – all between 5 and 18 years old – are going through depression, bipolar disorder, ADHD. Their families don't know what services are available and are intimidated by the system. Many parents also struggle with their own issues, so home life can be rough. And school isn't any better. These are the kids who get bullied, suspended; school may be calling home every day. They have few friends and no place to go that will accept them; **they don't seem to have a lot of choices**.

That's why Children's ICM is so important. The **Intensive Case Managers understand mental health and know how to get families the services they need**. They help families advocate for themselves and connect them with the right mental health and social services. They also help parents learn to set limits and provide structure at home, and they work with schools to put kids in classroom settings where they won't feel like failures anymore.

Case Managers also **help children learn about their illness and build the coping skills they need to stay out of the hospital, stay at home with their families, and reach their goals**.

Thanks to Children's ICM, families are no longer alone. The program gives parents a resource to help do what's best for their children, and it gives kids a chance to take control of their mental health and get their childhood back.

Program Portrait*

Michelle was a depressed teen, heading down a dangerous path. By the age of 15 she was getting drunk, getting high, cutting school and having sex. Her behavior was becoming dangerous and she needed someone to help her get life under control.



"She had so much potential," says Maria Moise, Michelle's Intensive Case Manager. "I spent lots of time trying to get her to see her greatness. I needed to convince her that **she could have a better life if she made different choices**."

For Michelle's own safety, Maria arranged for her to go into residential treatment. She helped Michelle understand that she had been using drugs and alcohol to escape from her depression.

With Maria's help, Michelle redefined the life she wanted to have. She was able to live at home again, and went back to school. Michelle worked hard and earned her diploma. She got married and moved away – but she still calls Maria to let her know she's doing well.

"She has a child now," Maria says with a smile. "She's made a conscious effort to offer her child a different life."

*Names and images have been changed to protect confidentiality