



BrainSTEPS

Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, & Students

A BRAIN INJURY SCHOOL RE-ENTRY CONSULTING PROGRAM

Student Care Binder

Pennsylvania's

Child & Adolescent Brain Injury

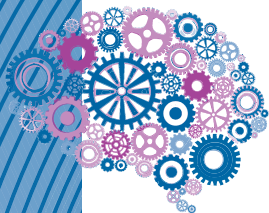
School Consulting Program

www.brainsteps.net

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The BrainSTEPS Program was created in 2007 by the PA Department of Health and is implemented by the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania. BrainSTEPS is jointly funded by the PA Department of Health and the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education via the PaTTAN network.



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The BrainSTEPS (Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, & Students) Brain Injury School Re-Entry Consulting Program assists Pennsylvania schools in creating educational plans for students following acquired brain injury. Acquired brain injuries (ABI) are brain injuries that occur after birth and include both traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and nontraumatic brain injuries (nTBI).

After a brain injury, students may return to school with temporary or lifelong impairments that have a significant impact on classroom performance. BrainSTEPS has been designed to consult with school teams and families in the development and delivery of educational services for students who have experienced any type of acquired brain injury. BrainSTEPS assists schools in building their capacity by serving as brain injury consultants to the school districts and teachers of these students.

- BrainSTEPS works to not only re-enter students from hospital/rehabilitation to school after a new brain injury, but with students previously identified as having a brain injury who may begin to develop educational impacts over the years as their brains mature and develop.
- Thirty BrainSTEPS teams are based out of the educational intermediate units and three large school districts.
- Education professionals, medical rehabilitation professionals, and family members comprise the BrainSTEPS teams.

BrainSTEPS serves the following types of acquired brain injuries:

Concussions (mild TBI), moderate and severe Traumatic Brain Injuries caused by sports/recreational activities, falls, assault, abuse, motor vehicle accidents (includes bicycle), pedestrian accidents, and shaken baby syndrome.

Non-Traumatic Brain Injuries caused by stroke, brain tumor, aneurysm, lack of oxygen to the brain, lightning strikes, chemotherapy/radiation impacts to the brain, near drowning, seizure disorder, brain infections (encephalitis, meningitis), toxic or metabolic injury, and viruses.

BrainSTEPS supports school districts in the following ways:

- Identification of students with traumatic and nontraumatic brain injuries
- School re-entry planning
- Intervention selection and implementation
- Educational plan development
- Concussion management for return to academics
- Teacher training, peer training, family training
- Ongoing, annual monitoring until graduation
- Family support and resource sharing
- Awareness training to medical, rehabilitation, and community facilities

Brain injury facts:

- Brain injury is a **leading** cause of death and disability in children and adolescents.
- Physical recovery is not a sign that the brain has healed. You can't gauge recovery from brain injury based on how a child looks on the outside.
- Brain injury severity does not equate with how the student will function academically or socially/emotionally in school.

- A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury and can have lifelong effects.
- Students do not need to strike their heads to sustain a brain injury. A sudden jolting motion of the head may be all the force that is necessary to cause a brain injury.
- It is not common to lose consciousness after a concussion. Less than 10 percent of concussions involve a loss of consciousness.
- Children do not simply “bounce back” after brain injury. In fact, injury to the developing brain can impact future learning.
- Effects of brain injury are not always immediately apparent and may not become evident until the child passes through important developmental stages. Over time, difficulties may emerge as the demands are increased on parts of the brain originally injured.

How to Make a BrainSTEPS Referral

The BrainSTEPS Team will accept referrals from school districts, agencies, parents, physicians, early intervention service providers, or any other service providers.

Go to **www.brainsteps.net**

Click on Make a Student Referral to make an electronic referral

or

Contact your local BrainSTEPS team directly:

For general BrainSTEPS Program information contact:

Dr. Brenda Eagan-Johnson, CBIS-AP

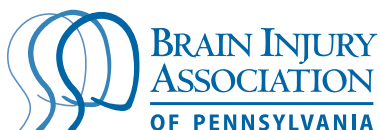
BrainSTEPS Director

Email: brenda@brainsteps.net

Phone: 724-944-6542

www.brainsteps.net

The BrainSTEPS Program is jointly funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and is implemented through the Brain Injury Association of PA.



Traumatic Brain Injury

Each year, over 4,000 of Pennsylvania's children/adolescents survive severe traumatic brain injuries significant enough to require hospitalization. Many are left with life-altering difficulties in physical, cognitive, or behavioral functioning.

If your child exhibits any of these symptoms:

- Seizure: eyes fluttering, body going stiff, staring into space
- Forgets everything, amnesia
- Hands shake, tremors, muscles get weak, loss of muscle tone
- Nausea or vomiting

Consult your child's doctor immediately!

When you suspect a brain injury:

Possible Causes:

- Falls
- Motor vehicle crash
- Sports injury
- Physical violence

Many children and adolescents with mild brain injury (concussion) may never see a health care professional or have any long-term difficulties. Some adolescents have problems that may not be noticed right away. You may see changes in your teenager over several months that concern you. This fact sheet lists some of the more prevalent signs of a mild brain injury. Your teen may also be exhibiting symptoms that are not included on this list. If your teen has any of the following problems – **and they persist** – consult your child's doctor.

Difficulty Thinking

- Has trouble remembering things
- Has trouble paying attention
- Reacts slowly
- Thinks slowly
- Takes things too literally, doesn't understand jokes
- Understands words but not their meaning

- Thinks about the same thing over and over
- Has trouble learning new things
- Has trouble putting things in order (desk, room, papers)
- Has trouble making decisions
- Has trouble planning, starting, doing and finishing a task
- Has trouble remembering to do things on time
- Makes poor choices (loss of common sense)

Trouble Communicating

- Changes the subject, has trouble staying on topic
- Has trouble thinking of the right word
- Has trouble listening
- Has trouble paying attention, can't have long conversations
- Does not say things clearly
- Has trouble reading
- Talks too much

Changes in Personality, Mood, or Behavior

- Is irritable, anxious, restless
- Gets upset or frustrated easily
- Overreacts, cries or laughs too easily
- Has mood swings
- Wants to be alone or away from people
- Is afraid of others, blames others
- Wants to be taken care of
- Does not know how to act with people
- Takes risks without thinking first
- Depressed
- Doesn't want to do anything, can't "get started"
- Is tired, drowsy
- Is slow to respond, to process information, or to complete tasks

- Trips, falls, drops things, is awkward
- Eats too little, eats all the time, or eats things that aren't food
- Has different sexual behavior
- Starts using or has a different reaction to alcohol or drugs
- Takes off clothes in public
- Change in relationships with friends
- Variation in school/academic performance

Health Problems

- Headaches, including:
 - Recurring headache
 - Pain in the head muscle
 - Pain in the skull
 - Pain below the ear
 - Pain in the jaw
 - Pain in or around the eyes
- Balance Problems
 - Dizziness
 - Trouble with balance
- Sensory Changes
 - Bothered by smells
 - Experiences changes in taste or smell
 - Experiences appetite changes
 - Ringing in the ears
 - Hearing loss
 - Bothered by noises
 - Can't handle normal background noise
 - Feels too hot
 - Feels too cold
 - Doesn't feel temperature at all
 - Blurry vision
 - Seeing double
 - Hard to see clearly (hard to focus)
 - Bothered by light
- Sleep Problems
 - Can't sleep through the night
 - Sleeps too much
 - Days and nights get mixed up
- Pain Problems
 - Neck and shoulder pain
 - Unexplained body pain

What to Do:

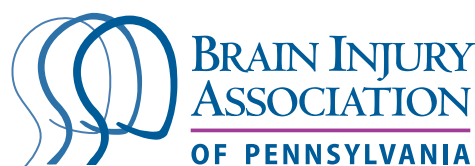
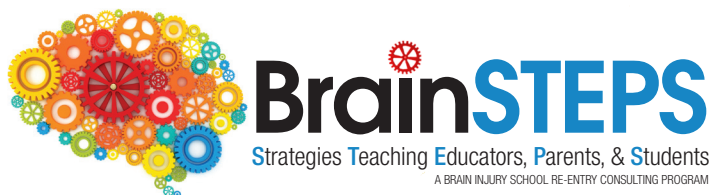
If your child has any of the problems on this list, and they persist, ask your child's doctor to have your child seen by a specialist in brain injury who can help your adolescent learn skills (rehabilitation).

If your child experiences any changes listed on this sheet that impact his or her education at school, contact:

- Brenda Eagan-Johnson, Ed.D., CBIS-AP
BrainSTEPS State Director
Brain Injury School Consulting Program
brenda@brainsteps.net
(724) 944-6542
www.brainsteps.net

or

- The Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania
Brain Injury Resource Line: 800-444-6443
www.biapa.org



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Arizona Governor's Council on Spinal and Head Injuries



This **BrainSTEPS Student Care Binder** is a tool you can use to organize information about your child's acquired brain injury throughout their school years. The **BrainSTEPS: Student Care Binder** can be taken with you to meetings and appointments to share important information with your child's doctors, other health care professionals, and school staff.

Uses for the BrainSTEPS Student Care Binder include:

- One place to store all important educational and medical records, reports and evaluations;
- File information about your child's health history;
- List phone numbers for health care providers and community organizations;
- Prepare for appointments;
- Share new information with your child's primary doctor, public health or school nurse, school personnel during key transition years, etc.

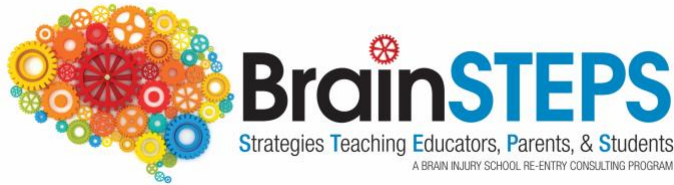
To set up your BrainSTEPS Student Care Binder:

STEP 1: Gather existing information: Gather any health, educational, transition, and personal, social information you already have at home about your child. This may include reports from recent doctor visits, immunization records, recent summary of a hospital stays, medical or rehabilitation evaluation or discharge reports, this year's school plan, schedules for home & school, test results, or informational pamphlets.

STEP 2: Review the BrainSTEPS: Student Care Binder sections. Your child's BrainSTEPS team can assist you in organizing your binder, just call/email your regional BrainSTEPS team leader.

STEP 3: Choose what to keep in the BrainSTEPS: Student Care Binder: Decide what information you look up most often and what information is needed by others caring for your child. Store other information in a file drawer or box where you can find it if needed.

STEP 4: Assemble your BrainSTEPS: Student Care Binder: The key is to make it easy for ***you and your child*** to find the information you need, quickly and easily.



Supports for Online Learning for Students with Mild/Concussion, Moderate, & Severe Acquired Brain Injuries

All public schools in Colorado & Pennsylvania are in the best position to support students with acquired brain injury, regardless if students are in brick & mortar school buildings or taking online classes, because schools have access to the **BrainSTEPS** Brain Injury School Consulting Program.

Because students with brain injury may have difficulty with some aspects of online learning, BrainSTEPS developed a list of academic adjustments that can be used with students participating in remote online learning during the pandemic.

BrainSTEPS was created by the PA Department of Health in 2007 and is jointly funded by the PA Department of Health and the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education.

During online learning students with acquired brain injuries may have difficulty:

- *Visual scanning* - Searching/scanning for visual information
 - *Visual attention* - Mentally focusing on what is on the screen
 - *Visual memory* – Difficulty recognizing, encoding, recalling visual information
 - *Cognitive fatigue* - a decrease in cognitive energy that occurs from focusing on sustained cognitive demands (e.g., schoolwork, learning), independent of sleepiness.
-

BrainSTEPS suggested academic adjustments that may help alleviate common concussion symptoms when participating in online learning

**colored font below is clickable*

- Discourage student from doing online learning on a smart phone – the screen is too small and can cause eye fatigue and cognitive fatigue. Encourage use of laptop or computer screen (use largest screen available)
- Adjust computer display
 - Increase font size (large print is defined as 16 -to 18-point bold type, depending on the typeface used)
 - Adjust screen settings to enlarge entire screen
 - Dim screen brightness
 - Encourage student to try out alternative screen colors
 - Contrast desktop screen from light to dark
- Computer blue light blocking glasses may help reduce eye fatigue

- Reduce screen glare (encourage student to sit away from windows, bright lights)
- **Text-to-speech** -for a student who may find reading too taxing they can have books or documents read aloud. Examples include:
 - [Snap and Read](#)
 - Audio Books: [Audible](#), [Scribd](#)
 - Reads other types of documents- [NaturalReader](#), [Voice Dream Reader](#)
- **Speech-to-text** - Speech recognition software that will turn a student’s speech into text on the computer screen.
 - Siri’s dictation feature offers real-time speech-to-text conversion, recording the words you say as typed text on Apple products.
 - [Mac Speech to Text](#) (Apple products)
 - [Dragon](#)
 - [Google Docs Speech to Text/Voice Typing](#) on Chrome browser
- Scanners with [Optical Character Recognition \(OCR\)](#) software which converts print-to-speech output
- Have student use word prediction software that predicts words while the student is typing such as:
 - [Co:Writer](#)
 - [TypeIt4Me](#) (Macs only)
- Cue student to take short “eye breaks” from computer screen (e.g., focus on something across the room to give eyes a rest, close eyes for a short period of time)
- Schedule longer “brain breaks” from the computer throughout day
- Reduce visual clutter on the screen pages to reduce visual overload
 - [Immersive Reader](#)
 - [Safari Reader](#) on the Safari browser
 - [Mercury Reader](#) extension on Chrome browser
- For students with visual field neglect, provide cues to scan entire screen for content.
- A teacher should use headings for any content changes on the screen
- A teacher can read exams to the student via [Zoom](#) or other online platform. **Zoom is currently offering free subscriptions for all K-12 public schools.**
- Clock apps to time built in breaks, to chunk reading time, break up screen time, etc.
- Record online session content so student can review
- Use *concept mapping* software – to help the student organize thoughts, get started on a writing assignment, plan a project
- Provide extended time for projects and assignments
- Offer “office hours” via Zoom, etc.
- Offer online tutoring

- Encourage sticking to a daily schedule
- Discourage student naps – it is important to remain on a normal sleep schedule to reduce symptoms
- Provide checklists that break down tasks, classwork, homework, key learning content to alleviate difficulty keeping up during online learning
- Offer a *touch-base teacher school counselor, social worker* or school psychologist for emotional support - online learning can cause the student with concussion to experience additional anxiety and/or depression due to the social isolation coupled with symptoms
- Encourage use of noise blocking headphones when doing schoolwork at home if there are other siblings/parents in the same room or within close vicinity
- Teachers of online content should use *Tables* and *Frames* online sparingly

Additional assistive technology found on all mobile device smart phones (iPhone, Android, etc.):

1. https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-thats-built-into-mobile-devices?_ul=1*598qj*domain_userid*YW1wLXpvQ1lXVXdfTmVJdFV3TDV1NTISbFE.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gTn4Q-9Lk8&feature=youtu.be>

****Emotional mood changes, depression, anxiety can be effects of concussion.** Monitor the student for signs of anxiety related to online learning, increasing pandemic fears, social isolation and refer all concerns to parent, school psychologist, school counselor, and/or social worker for follow up.

**Please Note: Specific programs listed are provided as possible resources. The BrainSTEPS program has not individually vetted and does not endorse any specific programs listed.*

BrainSTEPS - PENNSYLVANIA

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BrainSTEPS Program Coordinator
Phone: 724-944-6542
Email: eagan-johnson@biapa.org

BrainSTEPS - COLORADO

Janet Tyler, PhD, CBIST
BrainSTEPS CO Program Coordinator
Phone: 303-866-2879
Email: Tyler_J@cde.state.co.us

Student Information:

The Student section of this binder could include the following (as appropriate to your child):

- Blank notebook pages for the parent to take notes while at the hospital, rehabilitation, school, etc.
- Contact information for key school professionals
 - Principal
 - Teachers
 - School Nurse
 - Special Education Administrator/504 Coordinator
 - School Psychologist
 - Transportation office
 - Homebound tutor
 - Occupational Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Counselor
(for students age 14+)
- Doctor contact information
- Pharmacy contact information
- Rehabilitation Therapist contact information
- Psychologist/counselor/social worker contact information
- Daily school schedule
- Daily schedule for home
- Therapy schedule
- Community activity schedules
- Support Group schedule
- Health insurance information
- Resources, business cards, pamphlets
- Parent contact information

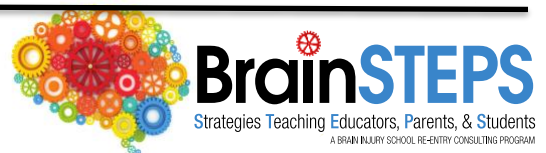
Medical/Rehabilitation Information:



The Medical/Rehabilitation section of this binder could include copies of the following (as appropriate to your child):

- Physician reports
 - Hospital records
 - Medications and side effects
 - Rehabilitation reports
 - Neuropsychological evaluation reports
 - Anything else you would like to add
-
- This section already includes information for you regarding how to contact the Special Needs Unit if your child qualifies, for coordinated care in PA.

Education Information:



The Educational section of this binder could include copies of the following (as appropriate to your child):

- BrainSTEPS Documents
 - Brain Injury Supports Framework
 - BrainSTEPS Team Consultant contact info
- Educational reports
- Class Schedule
- School map
- Report cards
- Mid-term progress reports
- Homebound information
- IEP documents
- Section 504 Plan document
- Evaluation Reports
- Occupational Vocational Rehabilitation paperwork
- And anything else you would like to add

Transition Resources:

The Transition section of this binder could include copies of the following (as appropriate to your child):



- Your Child’s Transition Plan
 - if your child is age 14 or older and in special education, this plan should be created by the school IEP team
- Information on the state’s Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.
 - You, as the parent, can make a referral for your child to the local VR office in your county. This is a government agency that assists individuals with disabilities prepare for and obtain competitive employment.
 - Specifics on VR services can be obtained directly from the VR office in your county. (Google “your county+PA+Vocational+ Rehabilitation” to find)

The following Pennsylvania Transition Resources are contained within this section. These resources are for adolescents and young adults who experience an acquired brain injury.

1. PA Head Injury Program (HIP)
2. Acquired Brain Injury Program
3. Medicaid Waivers –
 - Community Health Choices
 - OBRA
 - Independent Enrollment Broker
4. Occupational Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
5. PA NeuroResource Facilitation

Online Learning Resources:

This BrainSTEPS resource document was created to support students with acquired brain injury who were engaging in online learning due to COVID-19. The online learning resource for students with brain injury is applicable to any student who does work on the computer, cyber school students, etc.

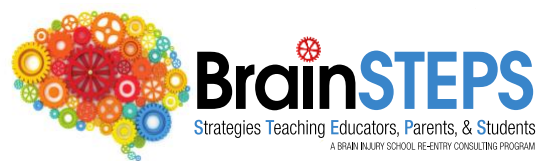
These academic support suggestions are helpful for students when they are participating in computer online learning environments post-brain injury.



Brain Injury Resources:

The Brain Injury Resources section is where brain injury information as it relates to a student's learning and behavior can be stored, to easily share with school staff. BrainSTEPS provides many resources for this section.





Coordinated Care for Your Child in PA Special Needs Units = Important Info!

If your child has one of the following insurance plans and has any type of special need following his or her brain injury, **please contact** the coordinating **Special Needs Unit** within the corresponding insurance plan below to access more **individualized care** for your child.

Each physical health-managed care organization has a Special Needs Unit (SNU), stand alone or contained within their Integrated Care Management Unit

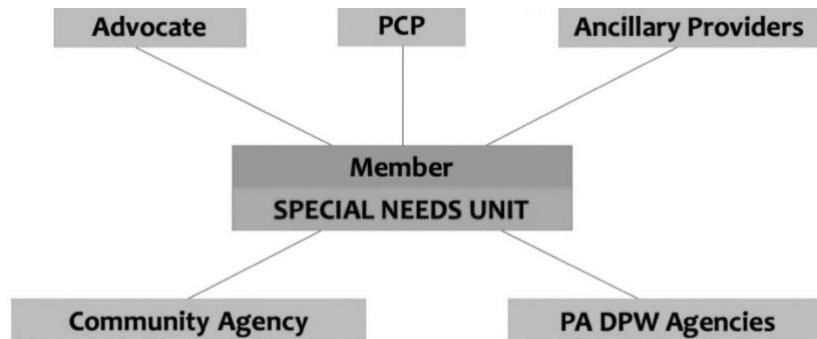
- Designated Special Needs Coordinators
- Experienced Special Needs Staff

Registered Nurses or Social Worker MSW level

- **Anyone who thinks they have a special need can be referred to the special needs unit**

The Special Needs Unit will help you:

- Navigate your child's Physical Health Managed Care Organization (PH-MCO)
- Access Timely & Effective Services
- with Care Coordination



Coordination may include:

- Behavioral Health MCO's
- Other Physical Health MCO's
- Medical Assistance Transportation Program
- Community Based Agencies
- Public Health Departments
- PA Government Agencies
- Home and Community Based Services Waivers
- Within the Physical Health MCO:
 - Member Services
 - Provider relations

- Pharmacy services
- Disease Management
- External- Outside of the Physical Health MCO:
 - Department of Public Welfare Special Needs Staff
 - Other state, county, and local agencies
 - Waiver providers
 - Community Resources

Special Needs Unit Coordinator Activities:

- Home Visits
- Specialist as PCP Requests
- Individual Case “Interagency” Meetings including IEP development participation
- 3-way calls with PCP
- Coordinate with ancillary providers
- Assist with obtaining referrals – medical, legal, other

Statewide Managed Care Map – Locate Your County:

Statewide Managed Care - Lehigh Capital Counties

Lehigh/Capital Counties in the HealthChoices Program:

Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, Perry, York

HealthChoices Physical Health Plans	Member Services Phone Numbers	Special Needs Units Phone Numbers
Aetna Better Health	866-638-1232 TTY 711	855-346-9828 TTY 711
AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania	888-991-7200 TTY 888-987-5704	800-684-5503 TTY 888-987-5704
Gateway Health Plan, Inc.	800-392-1147 TTY 711	800-642-3550 TTY 711
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan	800-414-9025 TTY 711	877-844-8844 TTY 711
UPMC for You	800-286-4242 TTY 800-361-2629	866-463-1462 TTY 800-361-2629

Statewide Managed Care - New East Counties

New East Counties in the HealthChoices Program:

Bradford, Carbon, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, Mifflin, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Schuylkill, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Wayne, Wyoming

HealthChoices Physical Health Plans	Member Services Phone Numbers	Special Needs Units Phone Numbers
Aetna Better Health	866-638-1232 TTY 711	855-346-9828 TTY 711
AmeriHealth Caritas Northeast	855-809-9200 TTY 855-859-4109	888-498-0766 TTY 855-859-4109
Geisinger Health Plan	855-227-1302 TTY 711	855-214-8100 TTY 711

Statewide Managed Care - New West Counties

New West Counties in the HealthChoices Program:

Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Venango, Warren

HealthChoices Physical Health Plans	Member Services Phone Numbers	Special Needs Units Phone Numbers
Aetna Better Health	866-638-1232 TTY 711	855-346-9828 TTY 711
AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania	888-991-7200 TTY 888-987-5704	800-684-5503 TTY 888-987-5704
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Statewide Managed Care - Southeast Counties

Southeast Counties in the HealthChoices Program:

Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia

HealthChoices Physical Health Plans	Member Services Phone Numbers	Special Needs Units Phone Numbers
Aetna Better Health	866-638-1232 TTY 711	855-346-9828 TTY 711

Health Partners of Philadelphia, Inc.	800-553-0784 TTY 877-454-8477	866-500-4571 TTY 215-849-1579
Keystone First Health Plan	800-521-6860 TTY 800-684-5505	800-573-4100 TTY 800-684-5505
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan	800-414-9025 TTY 711	877-844-8844 TTY 711

Statewide Managed Care - Southwest Counties

Southwest Counties in the HealthChoices Program:

Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland

HealthChoices Physical Health Plans	Member Services Phone Numbers	Special Needs Units Phone Numbers
Aetna Better Health	866-638-1232 TTY 711	855-346-9828 TTY 711
Gateway Health Plan, Inc.	800-392-1147 TTY 711	800-642-3550 TTY 711
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan	800-414-9025 TTY 711	877-844-8844 TTY 711
UPMC for You, Inc.	800-286-4242 TTY 800-361-2629	866-463-1462 TTY 800-361-2629

For More Info Contact:
Division of Quality & Special Needs Coordination
Bureau of Managed Care Operations
717-772-6300