

Children's Wisconsin provides holistic care and services at Trauma Quality of Life Clinic

When a child experiences a traumatic injury, care providers across specialties at Children's Wisconsin come together to treat the child and provide lifesaving measures in the emergency department and through surgery and hospitalization. The child is connected to any specialty care and physical and occupational therapies they may need, including, but not limited to, Children's Wisconsin's mental and behavioral health services, social work and Project Ujima, a hospital-based violence intervention program that focuses on enrolling violently-injured youth and helping them with crisis intervention, support services and connections to resources.

While Children's Wisconsin clinicians excel in providing lifesaving care, the quality of that child and family's lives are forever changed – whether due to permanent injury, disability, or mental health impacts and the trauma they've endured. The impacts last well beyond the initial treatment of the injury and reverberate through the patient's entire family.

In 2024, Children's Wisconsin began a pilot program instituting the Pediatric Trauma Quality of Life (TQOL) Clinic in partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin. Focusing on recovery, resilience and enhancing quality of life, the TQOL Clinic offers personalized, trauma-informed and multidisciplinary post-injury care for children and their families.

After a traumatic injury, a child may have lingering pain and follow-up care needs, experience nightmares or fear for their safety, and may have difficulty returning to their new normal. The list of providers on a child's care team can quickly grow as they progress on their healing journey, which often includes navigating multiple follow-up appointments. Often, families do not have resources to support them throughout the complicated process of post-injury care.

A dedicated community advisory board of patients, families, care teams and community organizations helped shape TQOL Clinic services to ensure they would meet the real needs of families facing trauma recovery. These experts have key insights on the experiences patients and families face and the disruption that traumatic injuries have on a young patient and the world that surrounds them.

Children's Wisconsin's TQOL Clinic brings together providers from several specialties together, including surgery, psychology, physical therapy, social work and Project Ujima and 414Life, the adult-focused hospital-based violence intervention program, to one location at the same time. Together, they provide support for the physical, mental and social needs of the child and their family to better coordinate care, services and resources through a convenient and efficient model of care.

Initial patient family surveys indicate 100% of families are satisfied with their care at the TQOL Clinic demonstrating positive attitudes about the multidisciplinary care, compared to the previous standard model. Most caregivers found the ability to see all providers in one visit very convenient, an efficient use of time, and an opportunity to have all of their questions answered.

Children's Wisconsin's TQOL Clinic makes these services more accessible to patients and families, who are enduring significant life changes and navigating complex dynamics, to help ensure kids and families receive the comprehensive care and support they need.