

Counselor Warns Parents: 'Most Psychiatric Medications Have Never Been Tested in Children'

Some medications prescribed to children with mental illness aren't even tested on children, says licensed mental health counselor Matthew Stanford. It's crucial that parents are informed about all of the nuances surrounding their child's unique situation so they aren't blindly following doctors' orders.

"Most psychiatric medications—the vast majority, probably 90% or more—have never been tested in children," Stanford says. "That doesn't mean they're not prescribed in children. They are, but they're prescribed off-label, which means that the physician is using their own judgment. They haven't necessarily been FDA-approved for that use in a person of that age.

"To begin with, the diagnosis of children is very difficult because some illnesses manifested in children look very similar to what it looks like in an adult. Other illnesses, when they manifest in children, they look completely different. ... So we have to be careful because you have to understand that children are not just little adults; their bodies work differently."

So, how can parents ensure they get the right treatment for their child? It's important to go to a child and adolescent psychiatrist or psychologist, rather than just any psychiatrist who mainly works with adults, Stanford says on the *Charisma News* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. Further, it's vital that the parent asks questions, such as

“What will you do if we don’t see an effect?”

“If you don’t see a change within a reasonable period of time, which would probably be more like two to three months ... then something has to change, you have to change medications,” Stanford says. “You always want to take the lowest amount of medication that you can. [Also,] when a person receives therapy, talking therapy, in addition to medication, they will take less medication. So if you ever want to have a chance of getting off medication, you absolutely have to be involved in some kind of psychotherapy. ... Get your child into therapy, in addition to medication.”

For more professional advice on how to get children the help they need for mental illness, [click here](#) for the entire episode.