



Blackstone Valley Pediatrics

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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Jessica Topitzer. I am a Family Nurse Practitioner, and I have been working at Blackstone Valley Pediatrics for the past nine years. I love my job—I truly feel I was put on this earth to care for others, especially the pediatric population.

Before becoming an NP, I worked as an RN in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Hasbro. There, I witnessed the severity of illness and the worst-case scenarios on a daily basis. The cases that affected me most deeply were those involving medically healthy adolescents who came in feeling so overwhelmed and hopeless that they attempted to take their own lives. Tylenol overdoses, cutting injuries, and attempted hangings—some of which we were unable to save—still feel like fresh memories to me.

Today, my heartbreak comes from a different place: the increasing number of young patients who need mental health support at earlier and earlier ages. I am seeing diagnoses of severe depression, anxiety, OCD, autism, and ADHD that must often be managed within primary care.

I have attended every class and seminar that Bradley has offered, but at the end of the day, I am not a psychiatrist—yet I am often expected to function as one. There is a critical shortage of psychiatrists in Rhode Island, with wait times of three to six months for an appointment. Pediatric patients in crisis simply do not have that kind of time.

The saving grace in my ability to care for these patients has been Pedi PRN. My comfort level in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions has grown tremendously over the past nine years because of their support. I now manage many medications confidently, but when I encounter concerning side effects, need to taper a medication, or want to confirm a treatment plan, I have immediate access to a psychiatrist. Pedi PRN is truly my lifeline.

When I need to consult a cardiologist about a new murmur or abnormal heart rhythm, I know they are readily available at Hasbro. Losing access to Pedi PRN would feel like losing access to cardiology. I see severe mental health concerns as no less urgent or dangerous than cardiac findings. Primary care providers must have access to specialists in order to deliver safe, effective care.

While I can quickly diagnose and treat conditions like ear infections or recognize mono symptoms, mental health disorders are far more complex. They require time, knowledge, and specialized expertise to manage safely. A National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health was declared over five years ago, and the situation has not improved.

Since March 2025, I have consulted Pedi PRN seven times. One patient in particular stands out. She initially presented to my office with severe anxiety—she could not make eye contact and was visibly distressed. She refused therapy and would not see another provider. Over the course of four years, with the support of Pedi PRN, she has transformed. Today, she comes into the office smiling. She has completed a formal neuropsychological evaluation, is doing well on both an SSRI and a stimulant, attends school regularly, is preparing for an overnight class trip, and is thriving in her drama club. I consulted Pedi PRN five times in her care—I could not have supported her without them.

Pedi PRN is critical to the safety and effectiveness of my medical practice. It allows me to provide the level of care my patients urgently need.

Please hear my voice when I say how essential it is that their funding remains intact.

Sincerely,
Jessica Topitzer, FNP