



## **CHA Sound the Alarm for Kids Messaging and By the Numbers**

### THE STATE OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN AMERICA

There is a mental health crisis among our children and teens. Children's mental health concerns were common before the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1 in 5 children experiencing a mental health condition annually. The pandemic worsened this ongoing and significant crisis in children's mental health by causing disruptions in daily routine, social isolation, financial insecurity, and grief for many children and families. These challenging circumstances will continue beyond our national recovery. Unfortunately, our current system and infrastructure to handle this mental health crisis are inadequate. As a result, families are suffering, and suicidal intent and self-injury among youth are on the rise. We urgently need Congress to help end this crisis.

### THE ESCALATING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- American children and teens have been experiencing increasing rates mental health disorders
  - **1 in 5 U.S. children experience a mental health condition** in a given year [[CHA](#)]
  - **60% increase in the rate of suicide** among 10- to 24-year-olds from 2007 to 2018, the second leading cause of death for this age group [CDC, [9/11/2020](#)]
  - The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that **nearly half of U.S. teens ages 13-18** now have at least one behavioral, mental, or emotional disorder [[National Institute of Mental Health](#)]
  - The national suicide rate among teens and young adults ages 10 to 24 **increased 57% from 2007 to 2019** [CDC, [9/11/2020](#)]
  - Depression and anxiety diagnoses for children have been on the rise, with the percentage of children aged 6 to 17 diagnosed with anxiety or depression growing from **5.4% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2012** [Psychiatric Times, [9/20/2021](#)]



- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, less than 30% of youth with MEB received care. [[Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)]

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC EXACERBATING THE CRISIS

- We've seen skyrocketing rates of suicide, self-injury, and mental health emergencies among children during the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - In just the first half of 2021, children's hospitals reported **cases of self-injury and suicide in children ages 5-17 at a 45% higher rate** than during the same period in 2019 [CHA, [9/21/2021](#)]
  - **20% increase** in admissions for **suicide attempts** and a more than **40% increase** in admissions for children with **disruptive behavior disorders** [CHA, [2/24/2021](#)]
  - **25% increase of mental-health-related emergency-department visits** for 5- to 11-year-olds from 2019 to 2020 [CDC, [11/13/2020](#)]
  - **31% increase of mental-health-related emergency-department visits** for 12- to 17-year-olds from 2019 to 2020 [CDC, [11/13/2020](#)]
  - Suspected suicide attempt emergency-department visits in 2020 were **50.6% higher among girls aged 12-17** than during the same period in 2019 and **3.7% higher for boys aged 12-17** [CDC, [6/11/2021](#)]
  - Among teens aged 12-17, **the mean weekly number of emergency-department visits** for suspected suicide attempts were **22.3% higher** during summer 2020 and **39.1% higher** during winter 2021 than during the corresponding periods in 2019, with a more pronounced increase among females [CDC, [6/11/2021](#)]
  - Children's hospitals have seen a **14% increase in mental health emergencies for kids ages 5-17 in the first two quarters of 2021** as compared to the same period in 2019 [CHA, [9/17/2021](#)]
- Parents and caregivers are worried about their children and looking for help and resources:



- **More than half of adults (53%)** with children in their household say they are **concerned about the mental state of their children** [CHA, [9/21/2021](#)]
- **More than a quarter (26%)** of parents say have **sought professional mental health help for their children because of the pandemic** [American Psychiatric Association, [5/5/2021](#)]
- The broad, damaging effects of a prolonged health crisis around the world have particularly devastating consequences for the youngest and most vulnerable:
  - **More than 140,000 American children lost a caregiver** due to the COVID-19 pandemic [National Institute on Drug Abuse, [10/7/2021](#)]
  - The isolation resulting from the loss of structure and routine of school drastically increases the risk of depression and anxiety, even up to 9 years after the fact [Psychiatric Times, [9/20/2021](#)]
  - Studies have found the duration of loneliness has a larger impact on children than the intensity, making the 14+ months of school closures a significant mental health challenge for children [Psychiatric Times, [9/20/2021](#)]

#### NEED FOR PREVENTATIVE TREATMENT, SERVICES, AND PROVIDERS

- Despite the growing need for treatment, services, and providers to address the specific needs of children in mental health crises, the United States lacks the appropriate resources to care for our children:
  - **15 million children and teens** nationwide are in need of care from mental health professionals, but **only 8,000 to 9,000 psychiatrists treat children and teenagers** in the United States [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, [4/2019](#)]
  - **43 of 50 states** are experiencing a **severe shortage in psychiatrists** specializing in child and teen care [Psychiatric Times, [9/20/2021](#)]

#### THE WIDESPREAD CONSEQUENCES OF THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS



- Mental health emergencies do not solely affect the well-being of children during a set time period - left unaddressed, there is a ripple effect across that child's life, their family, community, and our society as a whole.
  - A greater proportion of children and teens in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have mental health disorders
    - 50% of children and teens in the child welfare system have mental health disorders [National Center for Children in Poverty, [04/2020](#)]
    - As many as 70% of children and teens in the juvenile justice system have a mental health disorder [National Center for Children in Poverty, [04/2020](#)]
  - The severe lack of adequate wraparound resources to intervene early results in more and more children in a mental health crisis ending up in emergency rooms
    - Due to lack of space in psychiatric units, can mean "boarding," or waiting in ERs, for days until they can be admitted
    - Emergency rooms, hospitals, and providers already at capacity feel
  - More youth are seeing academics decline as a result of mental health struggles. One consequence of COVID-19 has been the loss of in-person learning and a switch for youth to a remote and at-home based style of education. [Gallup, [06/2020](#)]
    - Last May, nearly three in ten parents surveyed in a Gallup poll said their child was "experiencing harm to [their] emotional or mental health," with 45% citing the separation from teachers and classmates as a "major challenge."
    - Academic progress of students has been affected due to the pandemic, recent data shows late elementary and early middle school students were about 8-11 weeks behind expectations in math and 6-10 weeks behind expectations in reading. [Department of Education, [06/2021](#)]



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## STATE-BY-STATE AND HOSPITAL-SPECIFIC STATISTICS

- Colorado:
    - The number of children treated by Children’s Colorado for anxiety has doubled and depression number tripled compared to pre-pandemic levels, along with increases in substance and eating disorders [CNN, [7/22/2021](#)]
    - In January through April 2021, behavioral health emergency department visits to Children’s Colorado were up 72% over the same time period two years ago [CNN, [7/22/2021](#)]
    - Children's Colorado has seen a 90% increase in demand for behavioral health treatment in the past two years [Children’s Hospital Colorado, [5/25/2021](#)]
    - Children’s Colorado’s behavioral health unit in the emergency department is already over capacity two years after it was built [Children’s Hospital Colorado, [5/25/2021](#)]
    - Emergency transport teams at Children’s Colorado are seeing three to four suicide attempts per week [Children’s Hospital Colorado, [5/25/2021](#)]
  - Connecticut:
    - On average, in 2020, 15-17% of all screenings of 10-year-old patients at Connecticut Children’s were positive for risk of suicide. In the current fiscal year, 22-25% of children are screening positive for suicidal ideation [CHA, [6/13/2021](#)]
  - Florida:
    - Wolfson Children's Hospital saw a 300% increase in the number of behavioral health emergency admissions since April 2020 [CHA, [6/13/2021](#)]
  - Massachusetts:
    - Franciscan Children's in Boston reports that requests for outpatient behavioral health services for children of color increased 19% during the first year of COVID-19, compared to the year before [CHA, [9/17/2021](#)]
  - Ohio:
    - Dayton Children's Hospital saw a 23% increase in behavioral health inpatient days from July 2020 through May 2021 compared to the same period in the previous year [CHA, [6/13/2021](#)]
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- Washington:
  - Seattle Children's reported seeing one or two patients every night in March 2021 for attempted suicide, with patients waiting up to two weeks for an inpatient bed [CHA, [6/13/2021](#)]
- Wisconsin:
  - Children's Wisconsin in Milwaukee has experienced an 80% increase in referrals for mental health services in December 2020 compared to December 2019 [CHA, [6/13/2021](#)]