



### **SOUNDING THE ALARM FOR KIDS – MEDIA TALKING POINTS**

Every child in America should have the right to live up to their full potential.

The kids' mental health crisis is a national emergency.

Congressional action is urgently needed. The time to act is now!

- We are facing a significant national mental health crisis in our children and teens which requires urgent action at all levels of government.
- It's why we are 'Sounding the Alarm for Kids' by declaring a national mental health national emergency with the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists.
- Together with pediatricians, child and adolescent psychiatrists, children's hospitals are working to raise awareness about the severity of the situation.
- Parents, caregivers, and children experienced tremendous stress driven by disruptions in daily routines, social isolation, financial insecurity and grief. The depth of the mental health crisis among children and teens is staggering, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated it:
  - Before the pandemic, 1 in 5 children – anyone under age 18 – experienced a mental health condition on an annual basis.
  - From 2007 to 2018, there was a 60% increase in the rate of suicide among 10- to 24-year-olds, making it the second leading cause of death for this age group.
  - In just the first half of 2021, children's hospitals reported a 45% increase in the number of cases of self-injury and suicide in children ages 5-17 than during the same period in 2019.
  - More than half of adults (53%) with children in their household say they are concerned about the mental state of their children.
- The effects of this mental health crisis are widespread and long-term. The lack of early-intervention services means more children will end up in EDs, potentially waiting days for a bed in a psychiatric unit or residential facility to open up.
- The stress of this outsized crisis puts already-strapped health care systems at greater risk and could needlessly deplete critical points of access for mental health services.
- To help America's kids, we ask the administration and Congress to address the gaps preventing children and teens from accessing the mental health resources they need and deserve.
  - A promising step, the White House released [FACT SHEET: Improving Access and Care for Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Conditions](#) which outlines key challenges in providing and accessing



mental health supports for children and teens. We will continue work with the administration on additional steps they can take to direct more resources to pediatric mental health services and our workforce.

- We urge lawmakers to include in any final Build Back Better package the provisions of H.R. 4944, the Helping Kids Cope Act, which provides \$3 billion in funding to facilitate the expansion of community-based mental health services and support training for pediatric mental health professionals.
- We also urge congressional consideration of our comprehensive legislative proposal *Strengthening Kids' Mental Health Now* which improves access points to the pediatric mental health by strengthening system infrastructure and capacity.