

# H.R. 2412, the Helping Kids Cope Act

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## Child and Adolescent Mental Health Is a National Emergency

- 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health condition each year. (Source: [CDC](#))
- 50% of mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% by age 24. (Source: [SAMHSA](#))
- In 2021, a [CDC Survey](#) of American youth found:
  - 42% of high school students felt sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks.
  - 29% of high school students, said they experienced poor mental health in the past 30 days.
  - 1 in 5 high school students seriously contemplated suicide; 1 in 10 made an attempt.

These worrying trends in children's and teens' mental health require urgent action to provide a full range of pediatric mental and behavioral health services. In communities nationwide, there are too few options for children in need of mental health care, whether they would benefit from early intervention services, outpatient therapies, or more intensive treatment options. All too often, children and teens go without necessary mental and behavioral health care, leaving them struggling without adequate support. For some, this lack of intervention translates to worsening conditions and, too frequently, a state of mental health crisis. Children's hospitals continue to report high numbers of children who are boarding – waiting in a hospital for an appropriate care placement to become available. In order to serve our children in need, now and into the future, transformational actions must be taken now to strengthen access to mental health care for kids.

Federal resources to address mental health too frequently do not make their way to children or the pediatric providers who serve them. **H.R. 2412, Helping Kids Cope Act, puts kids first!** Purposefully designed to address children's unique needs, this bill includes critical investments that will bolster the pediatric mental health workforce and improve the availability of a full continuum of care for kids.

## The Helping Kids Cope Act ([H.R. 2412](#)) will:

Establish three new grant programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) specifically focused on urgent needs of pediatric mental and behavioral health care. Together these grants:

### **Improve access to community-based services and support**

- Strengthen community-based pediatric mental health services by enabling communities to implement or develop new programs and policies tailored to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children.

### **Support training to enhance the pediatric mental health workforce**

- Bolster the capacity of the current pediatric health workforce through expanded mental and behavioral health training and support for pediatric mental health professionals.

### **Invest in critical pediatric mental health infrastructure**

- Expand and enhance critical pediatric mental health infrastructure to improve our national capacity to deliver appropriate care for children with more intensive treatment needs, including inpatient psychiatric care and step-down care, such as day programs or intensive outpatient services.