

The Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act Puts Kids First!

Child and Adolescent Mental Health is a National Emergency – Key Facts

- 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health condition each year. (Source: [CDC](#))
- 50% of mental illness begins by age 14. (Source: [SAMHSA](#))
- Emergency department visits for children's mental health more than doubled between 2016 and 2020. (Source: CHA PHIS Data)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24. (Source: [CDC](#))

Urgent action is needed to expand capacity to deliver appropriate care to meet children's mental and behavioral health needs across a full continuum of services. In many communities, there are too few options for children in need of mental health treatment and too often children go without the necessary care, often resulting in more serious mental health conditions. As a result, children's hospitals are reporting significant increases in the number of children in crisis who are "[boarding](#)," or waiting in hospitals for appropriate care placements to become available. A comprehensive approach to pediatric mental health care must include clinical and non-clinical health services and access to a full spectrum of care, including mental health promotion and prevention as well as early intervention and treatment. Transformational actions must be taken now to strengthen access to mental health care for kids. It must include a clear path to grow and support the pediatric mental health workforce in order to serve our children in need, now and into the future.

All too often, federal resources to address mental health do not make their way to children or the pediatric providers who serve them. [H.R. 7236, the Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act](#), puts **kids first!** Purposefully designed to address children's unique needs, this bill includes reforms and investments that will bolster the pediatric mental health workforce and ensure the availability of a full continuum of care for kids.

The Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act (H.R. 7236) will:

Strengthen support for pediatric mental health through Medicaid:

- Increase reimbursement for pediatric mental health services, targeting support directly to providers.
- Guide states toward best practices for improving access to a full continuum of mental, emotional and behavioral health services for children, including through telehealth.
- Review state implementation of EPSDT annually to identify barriers and opportunities to improve the availability of pediatric mental and behavioral health services.

Improve timely access to community-based care and support:

- Identify regulatory and legal barriers which inhibit providers' ability to increase care capacity and promote existing flexibilities states might use to expand pediatric mental health service availability.
- Create a new grant program at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) uniquely focused on strengthening community-based pediatric mental health services and enabling communities to implement or develop new programs and policies tailored to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children and adolescents.

Develop and grow the pediatric mental health workforce:

- Establish a new HRSA workforce grant program focused specifically on bolstering the pediatric mental and behavioral health workforce, through expanded training for the current workforce and targeted investment in the recruitment, retention and diversity of the next generation of pediatric mental health professionals.

Investment in critical pediatric mental health infrastructure:

- Creates a HRSA program dedicated to strengthening critical pediatric mental health infrastructure and expanding 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.