



Sound the Alarm for Kids Policy Principles

Sound the Alarm for Kids seeks to raise awareness of the national emergency in child and adolescent mental health accelerated by the pandemic. We support policies which promote social and emotional health for children from infancy through adolescence and enhance their access to culturally and developmentally appropriate mental health care when they need it. As partners, we stand together to call for bold action to meet the challenges of this crisis and build a future where all children can receive the mental health support they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Bolster prevention – Implement preventive policies that promote healthy early childhood development, facilitate expanded screening and early identification, and connect families to support services that address social determinants of health and prevent adverse childhood experiences.

Ensure access to screening, diagnosis, and treatment – Increase federal funding to ensure all families and children can access evidence-based mental health screening, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of racial and ethnic minority children and families and under-resourced communities.

Build robust systems of care – Fully fund comprehensive, community-based systems of care that connect families in need of behavioral health services and supports with evidence-based interventions in their home, community or school, including navigation, peer support, trauma-informed care, and services that support relational health and family resilience.

Recognize and address the needs of disproportionately impacted communities – Intentionally design policies to meet the needs of racial and ethnic minority children and families, LGBTQIA youth, low-income families, as well as children served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Support the pediatric mental health workforce – Prioritize strategies to address longstanding workforce challenges in child mental health and intensify efforts to recruit underrepresented populations into both clinical and non-clinical mental health professions.

Reach children and families where they are – Increase support for comprehensive school-based mental health programs and services. Accelerate adoption of effective, financially sustainable models of integrated mental health care within primary care pediatrics, schools, and early learning settings.

Relieve the boarding crisis – Address the ongoing challenges of the acute care needs of children and adolescents by expanding access to step-down programs from inpatient units, short-stay stabilization units, and community-based crisis response services.

Expand youth suicide prevention – Strengthen efforts to reduce the risk of suicide in children and adolescents through prevention programs in schools, primary care, and community settings.

Improve access to telehealth – Address regulatory challenges and improve access to technology to ensure telemedicine's continued availability to provide mental health care to children, adolescents, and their families and caregivers.

Enhance data collection – Improve the collection, analysis, and integration of child health, service utilization, and demographic data to better assess trends, identify gaps, and strengthen existing programs and systems.

Advance mental health parity – Advance policies that ensure compliance with and enforcement of mental health parity laws.