



State of Children's Mental Health Crisis

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 is on the rise. We urgently need Congress to help end this crisis.

COVID-19 AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Data illustrates that the pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the mental health of children and teens.

- Symptoms of depression and anxiety and the **risk of suicide among children and teens have increased** throughout the pandemic.
- In the first half of 2021 alone, 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.
- **More than half of adults** (53%) with children in their households say they are concerned about the mental state of their children.



INCREASED DEMAND AND STRETCHED CARE CAPACITY COLLIDE

Currently, children's hospitals report a shortage of inpatient beds to support growing numbers of kids in crisis, resulting in more children boarding in hospital emergency departments while awaiting alternative placement options. The lack of capacity is exacerbated by persistent shortages across disciplines within the pediatric mental health workforce.

- **Children's Hospital Colorado** reports in 2021, they saw more than 6,500 ED behavioral health visits of children in crisis across the hospitals' pediatric system. From Jan.-Oct. 15, 2021, 70% more children came to the EDs due to a mental health crisis, compared to the same time period before the pandemic in 2019.
- **Children's Wisconsin** in Milwaukee, ED visits for mental and behavioral health concerns have increased by 40% since 2020. Additionally, call volumes to the hospital's Mental and Behavioral Health Access Center tripled between 2019-2021.
- **Wolfson Children's Hospital** in Jacksonville, Florida, experienced a 300% increase in the number of pediatric behavioral health emergency admissions since the start of the pandemic.

TO ADDRESS THE ONGOING CRISIS IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH:

- **Invest in pediatric mental health infrastructure** – provide additional funding in grants to children's health care providers to increase their capacity to provide pediatric mental health services.
- **Support the pediatric mental health workforce** – provide additional funding annually dedicated to pediatric mental health workforce training and development across a wide array of pediatric mental health fields.