

Update on Children's Behavioral Health

Richard Margolis MD

Medical Director

Division of Prevention & Behavioral Health Services

The Children's Department (DSCYF)

Surgeon General's Advisory highlights the nation's youth mental health crisis

- In December 2021 U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new Surgeon General's Advisory to highlight the **urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis.**
- The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health outlines **the pandemic's unprecedented impacts on the mental health of America's youth and families,** as well as **the mental health challenges** that existed long before the pandemic.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, **mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people**, with up to **1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17** in the U.S. having a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder.
- Additionally, from 2009 to 2019, the share of **high school students** who reported **persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40%**, to more than **1 in 3 students**.

Suicidal behaviors among high school students increased during the decade preceding COVID

- **19% seriously considering attempting suicide, a 36% increase from 2009 to 2019.**
- **About 16% made a suicide plan in the prior year, a 44% increase from 2009 to 2019.**
- **Between 2007 and 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 in the U.S. increased by 57%, and estimates show more than 6,600 suicide deaths among this age group in 2020.**

The pandemic added to the pre-existing challenges that America's youth faced

- **Children and adolescents lives were disrupted:**
- **in-person schooling,**
- **in-person social opportunities** with peers and mentors,
- **access to health care and social services,**
- **food,**
- **housing,** and the
- **health of their caregivers.**

The pandemic added to the pre-existing challenges that America's youth faced

Most heavily affected youth who were vulnerable to begin with:

- Youth with disabilities,**
- Racial and ethnic minorities,**
- LGBTQ+ youth,**
- Low-income youth,**
- Youth in rural areas,**
- Youth in immigrant households,**
- Youth involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and**
- Homeless youth.**

A national emergency in child and adolescent mental health

- This Fall, a coalition of the nation's leading experts in pediatric health, the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**, the **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)** and the **Children's Hospital Association (CHA)** declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health.
- “We are caring for young people with **soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality** that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities.

Declaration from the AAP, AACAP and CHA

- “We must identify **strategies to meet these challenges** through innovation and action, **using state, local and national approaches** to improve the **access to and quality of care** across the continuum of **mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment**.
- The challenges facing children and adolescents are so widespread that **we call on policymakers at all levels of government and advocates for children and adolescents to join us** in this declaration and advocate for the following ten initiatives:

AAP, AACAP and CHA: Join us in this declaration and advocate for the following

- Increase federal funding dedicated to ensuring all families and children, from infancy through adolescence, can access **evidence-based mental health screening, diagnosis, and treatment to appropriately address their mental health needs**, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of under-resourced populations.
- Address regulatory challenges and **improve access to technology** to assure **continued availability of telemedicine to provide mental health care to all populations**.

Declaration from the American Academy of Pediatrics, AACAP and Children's Hospital Association

- Increase implementation and sustainable **funding of effective models of school-based mental health care**, including clinical strategies and models for payment.
- Accelerate adoption of effective and financially sustainable models of **integrated mental health care in primary care pediatrics**, including clinical strategies and models for payment.

AAP, AACAP and CHA: Join us in this declaration and advocate for the following

- Strengthen emerging efforts to **reduce the risk of suicide** in children and adolescents through **prevention programs in schools, primary care, and community settings.**
- Address the ongoing challenges of the **acute care needs** of children and adolescents, including **shortage of beds and emergency room boarding** by **expanding access to step-down programs from inpatient units, short-stay stabilization units, and community-based response teams.**

Declaration from AAP, AACAP and CHA

- Fully fund comprehensive, **community-based systems of care** that **connect families** in need of behavioral health services and supports for their child **with evidence-based interventions in their home, community or school.**
- Promote and pay for **trauma-informed care services** that support relational health and family resilience.

AAP, AACAP and CHA: Join us in this declaration and advocate for the following

- Accelerate strategies to address **longstanding workforce challenges in child mental health**, including **innovative training programs, loan repayment, and intensified efforts to recruit underrepresented populations into mental health professions** as well as attention to the **impact** that the public health crisis has had **on the well-being of health professionals.**
- Advance policies that **ensure compliance with and enforcement of mental health parity laws.”**

PBH Services Addressing Behavioral Needs

- **Evidence-based, trauma-informed services**
- **Increased access to telehealth** in facilities and with community providers
- **School-Based Behavioral Health:** Middle School Behavioral Health Consultants and Fifty-Four Family Crisis Therapists (FCT's) in Elementary Schools in fifteen school districts and seven charter schools
- **Integrated care initiatives through the DCPAP grant** (child psychiatrists working directly with pediatric practitioners)

PBH Services Addressing Behavioral Needs

- **PBH Prevention Unit**

Substance Abuse Block Grants, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Delaware Fatherhood Initiative, Child Development Watch, Afterschool and Summer Programs

- **PBH Hospital Collaborative (connecting ERs, Psych Hospitals and PBH)**
- **RFP for our service continuum**
- **RFP for 4 additional crisis beds downstate**

Referral info for the month of January for each of the years

Year	Total Referrals	MRSS referral	IMD referral	Higher Level of Care besides IMD	OP Exhausted Benefit
2019	466	338	76	43	9
2020	542	403	66	53	20
2021	288	214	31	30	13
2022	439	308	55	61	15

Delaware Child Psychiatry Access Program

DCPAP provides:

- Pediatricians**
- Family Physicians**
- Advanced Nurse Practitioners**
- Physician Assistants**

with direct psychiatric consultation to provide behavioral health treatment within your own practice.

Delaware Child Psychiatry Access Program

- **Free Education and Training** provided to Pediatric Practitioners registered with DCPAP **to improve your capability to provide behavioral health treatment within your own practice.**
- **DCPAP also helps practitioners** refer pediatric patients for **appropriate behavioral health services** and identify other **behavioral health resources that may assist with services to patients.**