

The Rising Need for Behavioral Health Services in Children's Hospitals

Jennifer Katzenstein, PhD, ABPP-CN

Director, Psychology, Neuropsychology, and Social Work

Co-Director, Center for Behavioral Health



JOHNS HOPKINS
All Children's Hospital



Definitions, all a continuum

- Mental health – psychological state
 - “Impairment”
- Behavioral health – refers to how observable behaviors are expressed
 - Also can refer to state of mind plus physical condition
 - “Symptomatic”
- Physical health – condition of the physiological systems of the body

Mental health and behavioral health are used interchangeable at times; lots of variability in definitions

The State of Mental Health

pre-COVID and COVID-19

Mental Illness
is a Pediatric
Condition

We were in a mental
health epidemic
before the pandemic

Suicide is the
2nd leading
cause of death
in youth

Suicide is the
#1 cause of
death in youth
ages 14-17 in
the US

Behavioral
Health workforce
is not sufficient
to meet needs

Burnout
higher than
ever; great
resignation

Systems, Hospitals,
ERs are overwhelmed
with behavioral
health needs

Significant pediatric
inpatient psychiatry bed
deficit across the country,
overwhelm worsens

Treating the child with the
right level of care, in the
right place, at the right
time

Pre to During COVID-19

- 1 in 5 children will experience a mental illness
 - Now projections indicate 1 in 3 to 1 in 4
- 75% of all mental illness is diagnosable prior to age 24
 - Kids don't exist in a vacuum – role of families
- Over half will wait 8-10 years for treatment
 - Less than 50% will see a doctor for the treatment need, more often utilizing emergency care
- Recent AAP, AACAP, and CHA State of Emergency

Pre to During COVID-19

- Those previously at risk continued to be at risk
 - Preexisting mental health disorder
 - Having experienced a previous trauma
 - Food insecure or economically vulnerable
 - Experiencing a significant disruption to daily schedule
- 55% of children felt more “sad, depressed, unhappy”
- Education, schooling, and necessary therapies (OT, PT, SLT) disrupted

Impact on Workforce – Burnout from COVID-19 Pandemic

- High cost, long duration of training
- Low reimbursement
- Rates of providers coming in to the field are holding steady or declining, despite increasing needs
- Burnout increasing from demands and pandemic

Systems are Overwhelmed

- Hospital often first point of contact
- ER/Urgent Care
- Fragmented care/lack of coordination within and between systems

Children's hospitals are
uniquely equipped to
manage and care for these
children

Potential needs

- Staffing (salaries, faculty, therapists, trainees)
- Telemedicine expansion
- Software, technical equipment
 - Biofeedback
- Space
 - Inpatient
 - Group rooms
 - Kitchenette/meal prep for disordered eating



JOHNS HOPKINS

All Children's Hospital



all we do. all for kids.™