



Mental Health in Childhood and Adolescence

Public Policy Brief Summary

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
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Childhood and adolescence are times of developmental changes and transitions that unfold at a faster pace than later in life. Young people need parents and other caring adults to assist in caring for – and teaching the youth to care for – their mental health needs.

In any given year, approximately 1 in 10 young people suffer from mental disorders, yet fewer than 20% of those affected get the care they need.

Parents, teachers, care providers, service providers, and policymakers all have an important role to play in promoting good mental health for children and adolescents.

In addition to identifying and responding to the mental health needs of their children, parents should pay attention to their own mental health and its impact on their children.

Successful programs maximize protective factors and minimize risk factors to improve outcomes for kids.

Policymakers are vital in assuring that mental health services are available and accessible statewide, culturally responsive, adequately funded and of high quality.

When children or youth have mental health problems, they are not able to stay on course with their development.

Policymakers are vital in assuring that mental health services are available and accessible statewide, and are culturally responsive, adequately funded and of high quality.

Policy Recommendations From Research

- β Strong policy decisions about mental health issues are based on well-established research regarding child well-being, including risk and protective factors.
- β Across Minnesota, clinical providers and services are not able to meet the current level of mental health needs for children and youth. This is especially true for children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds and those who live in rural areas.
- β Parents and youth need to be involved in the design, development and evaluation of mental health systems that are intended to serve them.
- β Knowing when, how and where to obtain help can be a significant problem for families. Outreach, screening and education about and child development, including how to access services, can improve the capacity of parents to respond to the needs of their children.