

How Are the Kids?

Reimagine Education Conference

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AMSD/Metro ECSU

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Impact of Coronavirus on Youth Mental Health



Current State of Student Mental Health

October 2021

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association:

All declared a **national emergency** in children's mental health.

Third Quarter of 2021

Children's hospitals in U.S. recorded almost **38% more emergency department visits** for mental health cases.

They also reported nearly **54% more suicide and self-injury cases** compared to 2020, according to the CHA.

Current State of Student Mental Health

Student Online Searches
2019-2021
(*Securely Student Safety*
flagged alerts)

1. Kill myself (up 2 ½ times)
2. Drug overdose (up 2 ½ times)
3. Suicide (up 85%)
4. Depression (up 30%)

The Lancet Study: Mental Health Effects of School Closures: April 2020

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay warned that “the global scale and speed of the current educational disruption is unparalleled.”

When children and adolescents have mental health needs, closures mean a lack of access to the resources they usually have through schools.

Impact on Children's Mental Health



More “Covid Suicides” than Deaths from COVID in Kids

- Preliminary data suggest Covid accounted for barely 1.2% of all deaths in the under-25 age group.
- Biggest increase in youth deaths occurred in the 15-24 age bracket — the age group most susceptible to committing suicide.
- In July 2020 — just four months into the pandemic — CDC Director Robert Redfield remarked that “We’re seeing, sadly, far greater suicides now than we are deaths from COVID. We’re also seeing far greater deaths from drug overdose.”

Updates About Suicidality

- Reports of suicidal ideation have increased for all grade levels in the last six years.
- In 2019, 24% of 11th-grade students surveyed reported seriously considering suicide at some point, compared to 20% in 2013.
- 52% of students surveyed reported having been exposed to one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Adverse childhood experiences, mental health disorders, and/or substance use disorders are the most significant risk factors for suicidal behaviors.
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) reported Minnesota has a higher suicide rate than the U.S. average for 11 to 18-year-olds.

National Suicide Data Available in 2020

- Claim is supported by the increase in calls and emails to mental illness hotlines.
- Between March and August 2020, the National Alliance on Mental Illness HelpLine reported a 65% increase in calls and emails.
- Trevor Project — suicide prevention among LGBTQ plus youth — saw double its usual call volume.
- November 2020 - Crisis Text Line received 180,000 calls; its highest volume ever, and an increase of 30,000 from the previous month.
- Over 90% of those were from people under 35.

Fair Health Study

FAIR Health Study:

- database of 32 billion U.S. health insurance claims
- focused on the two billion from 2019 to 2020
- calculated the numbers filed for health services in the **pediatric age group**, which they defined as ages 0 to 22. (Source: J. Kluger, Time March 4, 2021)

Worse than Experts Feared

- Initially, children and teens were spared **most of the physical impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- In the Spring of 2020, mental health professionals began to worry about the impact of COVID 19 on children and youth.
 - **closed schools**
 - **lack of contact** with friends and extended family
 - **loss of milestones** like birthday parties, graduations
 - **excessive screen time**
 - **less adult supervision**
- The numbers are in—and they're in some ways **worse than the experts feared.**

Focus on Emotionally Turbulent Years from 13 to 18

- Focused to a somewhat lesser extent on claims filed by those ages 19 to 22.
- Both groups had **sharp spikes from pre-pandemic 2019 to 2020 in a range of psychological conditions.**
- **Major depression, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Adjustment Disorder, self-harm, substance abuse, overdoses, OCD, ADHD and tic disorders.**

Numbers are Startling

- **334% spike** in intentional self-harm among **13 to 18-year-olds** in the Northeast U.S. in August of 2020 compared to the same month in 2019.
- **49.6% increase** in depression and **67.5% increase** in generalized anxiety disorder among 19 to 22-year-olds across the U.S.

Expanded Measure of ACEs

- Original ACE studies focused on adversities in the home like abuse, neglect, and other household challenges.
- Scholars now agree that child adversity includes other experiences, and an expanded measure set of ACEs is needed.
- Exposure to racism (i.e., discrimination; stigma; minority stress; historical trauma) is one expanding area of research that is being considered for an “enhanced” ACE measure.

The Big Three

- **Most common conditions affecting the 13 to 22 group in both years were Anxiety, Depression and Adjustment Disorders.**
- **Exploded in Spring of 2020, increasing 80% to 90% year over year for the 13-18 group, and 45% to 65% for the 19-22 cohort.**
- **All three conditions have receded some in both groups, but still remain up to 25% more common than they were at the end of 2019.**

Adolescents Experience Mental Health Disorders “On Steroids”

“We see **[increased] depression and anxiety in all age groups**, but in adolescence it’s on steroids. When kids look into the future now, they’re looking at one that wasn’t what they envisioned before.”

(Robin Gurwitch, psychologist and professor at Duke University Medical Center).

A high school student commented, “**I used to be able to hang with my friends, and now that’s gone. I was looking forward to going to college** but my dad got COVID and we can’t afford it.”

Loss of Control Over Their Lives

“We absolutely foresaw this last year. **Kids feel like they don’t have much control over their lives and now there’s even more uncertainty,** with [regular school] and peer groups—who play such a big role in the sense of self—unavailable. Their developmental process has been interfered with.”

“Their **trajectory has been interrupted.**”

(Mary Alvord, Psychologist, 2021).

Substance Abuse

- Emotional pain and **self-medicating**.
- In the 13 to 18-year-old group, claims for **drug overdoses increased 95% in March and 119% in April**.
- Where substance abuse stopped short of overdosing, the numbers were 65% and 63% in those months.
- 19-22 group: peak increase for overdoses was a 65% jump in May; **substance abuse in general peaked at a 27% increase in April 2020**.
- **FAIR Health findings are mirrored** by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which reported the **highest annual number of U.S. overdose deaths ever in the year ending May 2020**.

Emotional Blowback of Pandemic

- **Can't be vaccinated away** like COVID-19.
- Long-haulers require treatment for the physical symptoms of the disease months after being infected.
- So will youth needing care for psychic pain.
- The pandemic that began in the spring of 2020 will not be leaving us anytime soon.

Current Events: Violence, Political and Racial Rhetoric, Media Coverage of Pandemic



Current State of Educator Wellness

Teaching may now be **the most stressful** profession, according to a **RAND survey** from June 2021.

Teachers were almost three times more likely to report symptoms of depression than other adults.

This state further imperils a profession that has long struggled with low pay and declining morale.

In January 2021, the NEA polled more than 3,000 of its teachers.

Nearly all of them **said burnout is a serious problem.**

More than half indicated plans to leave teaching earlier than expected.

The previous time the association surveyed its teachers, in August 2020, 37 percent wanted to leave.

Current State of Educator Mental Health

Black, Latino/a, and LGBTQ+ employees are far more likely to experience symptoms of mental illness, from anxiety and sadness to nightmares or paranoia (Mind Share Partners Study, 2021).

Black and Latino/a employees are much more likely than White peers to have lost loved ones to COVID-19, or to have been ill.



Check out the Educator Wellness Affinity Group this
Afternoon!

