

THE STATE OF MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN IN THE U.S.: A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

Lynda Gargan, Ph.D.

Executive Director, National Federation of
Families for Children's Mental Health

October 2019





**HAPPY
WORLD
MENTAL
HEALTH DAY!**

Among children aged 2-8 years, boys were more likely than girls to have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Among children living below 100% of the federal poverty level, more than 1 in 5 (22%) had a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Age and poverty level affected the likelihood of children receiving treatment for anxiety, depression, or behavior problems.

Only about 20% of children with mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders receive care from a specialized mental health care provider.

**MANY FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND HEALTHCARE FACTORS
ARE RELATED TO CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**



- ▶ Families question the validity of the first bullet. Are boys more likely to experience these challenges or are they more likely to be labelled?
- ▶ Families living in poverty are encouraged to see that the incidence of children experiencing challenges is similar across economic groups.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

From 2012 to 2017, the prevalence of past-year Major Depressive Episode (MDE) increased from 8.66 percent to 13.01 percent of youth ages 12-17. Now over two million youth have MDE with severe impairment.

Youth are not being identified as having an Emotional Disturbance, which can keep them from accessing necessary accommodations. The proportion of students identified with an Emotional Disturbance for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) was only 7.33 percent per 1,000 students in 2017.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IS WORSENING



- ▶ Families often feel that they are in a “no win” situation. They are aware that their child is experiencing challenges and yet schools are failing to identify them.
- ▶ Many families are hesitant to approach schools due to past negative experiences.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

YOUTH SUICIDE STATISTICS



Females attempt suicide more than three times as often as males; however, males die by suicide more than four times as often as the females.



In the age 10 to 24 group, 81% of the suicide deaths were males and 19% were females.



Cultural variations also exist in suicide rates.



Native American/Alaskan Native youth have the highest rates of suicide-related fatalities.



Caucasian youth have the second highest rates of suicides.



African-American youth have the third highest rates of suicides.



Hispanic youth are more likely to report having attempted suicide than their black and white, non-Hispanic peers.



- ▶ Families are often completely uninformed about the warning signs of suicidal thoughts in their children.
- ▶ While we educate our families about the warning signs for physical challenges, we continue to do a poor job of educating them about mental health challenges.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

- ▶ Much of social media has been weaponized and now provides an anonymous platform for bullying, hate and threatening behavior
- ▶ Children are becoming isolated and are not developing the social skills necessary to actualize their full potential
- ▶ Parents and children are addicted to social media and are not experiencing quality family time



THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- ▶ Families are struggling to feel comfortable monitoring their children's screen time. They need support to recognize this as an addictive behavior and training to deal with it.
- ▶ Cyber bullying is at epidemic rates and the results are often fatal. Our schools and other caring professionals are needed to help parents to understand this and to prevent this outcome.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

Prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) decreased in both youth and adults.

The prevalence rate of substance use disorder, including illicit drug or alcohol dependence or abuse, in adults in the past year decreased from 8.46 percent in 2012 to 7.68 percent in 2017.

The prevalence rate of substance use disorder in youth ages 12-17 decreased to 4.13 percent in 2017.

CURRENT STATISTICS ON SUBSTANCE USE



A Virginia doctor who prescribed more than 500,000 doses of opioids in two years was sentenced to 40 years in prison on Wednesday for leading what prosecutors called an interstate drug distribution ring.



- ▶ While it appears that substance misuse may be decreasing among young people and adults, this is not true in pockets of the country.
- ▶ When adults are involved in substance misuse, this directly affects their children. Often children find themselves in a parentified role.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

On September 30, 2017, there were an estimated 442,995 children in foster care.

On September 30, 2017, nearly one-third of these children (32 percent) were in relative homes, and nearly half (45 percent) were in nonrelative foster family homes.

On September 30, 2017, about half (56 percent) had a case goal of reunification with their parents or primary caretakers.

About half (49 percent) of the children who left foster care in FY 2017 were discharged to be reunited with their parents or primary caretakers.

Close to half of the children (43 percent) who left foster care in FY 2017 were in care for less than 1 year.

FOSTER CARE STATISTICS



- ▶ Foster care rates are increasing for multiple reasons, but 2 compelling issues are the fact that, due to a lack of child psychiatrists, therapists, etc., and inadequate insurance, many parents are being encouraged to release their children to the state to ensure that their child receives services.
- ▶ Children are also being placed in foster care at alarming rates due to the opioid crisis. In some states, due to the saturation of children needing placement, these children are being placed out of state with little chance of ever returning to their families and their home communities.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES



Need education

Need well-trained
professionals

Want to be
included in all
aspects of their
child's treatment

Are the only
consistent adults
in their child's life

Are counting on
you