



Child and Adolescent Mental & Behavioral Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for mental and behavioral health care; we must do more to ensure children have access to the full continuum of care. The pandemic has also highlighted the need to address the impact of technology on children and adolescents' mental health.

A National Emergency

Congress must prioritize the needs of children and adolescents in any mental health legislative package.

The mental health challenges facing young people are alarming and widespread, which is why AAP [declared](#) a national emergency in children's mental health last fall and recently released the [Blueprint](#) for Youth Suicide Prevention.

Tackling this crisis requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the full continuum of care and includes promotion, prevention, early intervention, and crisis response. To do this, we must ensure that children are able to access care where they are, including schools and their pediatrician's office.

Social media and other digital technology platforms are a ubiquitous part of young people's lives, and new protections are needed to create a digital environment that better supports their mental health.

Mental Health Integration in Pediatrics

Research shows that the integration of mental health into pediatric medical care expands access to care, improves outcomes, increases satisfaction, saves costs, and improves coordination.

The Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Program at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) supports pediatric primary care practices with telehealth consultation by child mental health teams thereby increasing access to mental health services for children and enhancing the capacity of pediatric primary care to screen, treat, and refer children with mental health concerns. A recent RAND study found that 12.3% of children in states with programs like these had received behavioral health services while only 9.5% of children in states without such programs received these services.

The AAP urges Congress to **pass the *Supporting Children's Mental Health Care Access Act (H.R. 7076/S. 3864)*** that reauthorizes the PMHCA program for 5 years, ensuring the continuation of these telehealth consultation programs while also expanding them to all states and enhancing their capacity to support schools and emergency departments.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Schools

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24, and rates have been rising for decades. Suspected suicide attempt ED visits were 50.6% higher in adolescent girls during the pandemic.

Schools play a critically important role in supporting the mental health of children and adolescents. The AAP **supports the *Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 1803/S.3628)***, which provides direct funding to schools by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Specifically, funding under H.R. 1803/S. 3628 can be used for a variety of mental health promotion and suicide prevention purposes, such as educational seminars, awareness campaign materials, peer-to-peer program support, telehealth, and training programs.

In any mental health package, Congress must prioritize the mental and behavioral health needs of children and adolescents.

Cosponsor or support:

- Supporting Children's Mental Health Care Access Act of 2022 (H.R. 7076/S. 3864)
- Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 1803/ S.3628)