

Children's Mental Health



This document provides an update to information in the *Community Action Network's Prescription For Wellness Assessment* report released in April 2001 which includes children's mental health.

Highlights

Families affected by children's mental health needs

It is estimated that as many as one in five children or adolescents may have a mental health problem that can be identified and treated, **and that one in five of the children suffering from mental health problems receives needed treatment** (Surgeon General's report on Children's Mental Health). Based on Census 2000, that is more than 38,663 children ages 18 and under in Travis County.

Travis County Children Uninsured

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, 152,709 people in Travis County are uninsured (approximately 23.6% of the total population). Nationally, 14% of the population does not have health insurance. 21.4% of the Texas population does not have health insurance, tying with New Mexico as the states with the highest percentage of uninsured people in the nation. More than 10% of the under age 18 population in Travis County do not have insurance (Austin/ Travis County Health and Human Services, Indigent Care Collaboration CHIP Outreach Coalition).

Overview

Children's mental health is determined by a cumulative interaction between genetics, prenatal health, physiological development, family member's health, environmental safety, economic, educational and social conditions, and a cumulative experience of the child's achievement. Disruption in any area can result in developmental tension, prolonged and/or severe stress creating a situation in which the child is at risk for a broad range of problems. Mental health is critical at every stage of a child's life, from infancy through young adulthood. **Many youngsters who are treated early and appropriately for mental health problems recover to lead normal lives.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is children's mental health?

According to the Center for Mental Health Services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMSHA), mental health is how we think, feel, and act as we face life's situations. It is how we look at ourselves, our lives, and the people in our lives. It is how we evaluate options and make choices. Like our physical health, our mental health is important at every stage of life. Mental health ranges from good to not so good and even to poor. A person's mental health may move through the range, sometimes that person is healthier than at other times. Sometimes he/she needs help in handling problems. Many people experience mental health problems at some time during their lives.

Like adults, children and adolescents can have mental health problems that interfere with the way they think, feel, and act. They can lead to school failure, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence, or suicide. Mental health or emotional problems often limit young people's current and future ability to be productive. In addition, these problems can be costly to families, the community, and the health care system.

Frequently Asked Questions about Children's Mental Health

Q: What risk factors are related to children's mental health?

- Biological Influences
- Family and Genetics
- Childhood Abuse and Neglect
- Psychosocial Influences
- Stressful Life Events
- Peer and Sibling Influences

Children experiencing any of or a combination of risk factors may exhibit an ability to cope and overcome them. However, some children appear to be more susceptible to these risk factors and the result of exposure may lead to a mental disorder. In many cases, research indicates that the cumulative effect of several risk factors is more likely to lead to a mental disorder. Risk factors, noted above, influence the development of a mental disorder or problems in social-emotional development.

Q: What is the prevalence of children's mental health disorders?

Estimated Prevalence of Common Mental Health Diagnoses in Children and Adolescents

	National Prevalence	AISD Estimate
Anxiety Disorder	8 to 10% of school age population	6,000-7,000 students
Major Depression	6 of every 110 children	2,800 students
Bipolar Disorder	1% of adolescents ages 14-18	250 students
Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	5% of all children	2,600 students
Learning Disorders	5% of all children	2,600 students
Conduct Disorder	4 to 10% of all children and adolescents	3,100-7,700 students
Autism	7 to 14 of every 10,000 children	35-70 students
Schizophrenia	3 of every 1,000 adolescents	76 students

Based on Austin Independent School District (AISD)

Source: USDHHS, 1999 and AISD enrollment figures 2001-2002

Q: How will population growth impact the number of children and adolescents with mental disorders?

The juvenile population (between 10 and 17 years of age) in Texas, especially among minorities, is one of the fastest growing in the United States. **This population growth will significantly impact the number of children and adolescents with mental disorders. In addition, major disparities in access to mental health care exist for minority groups.**

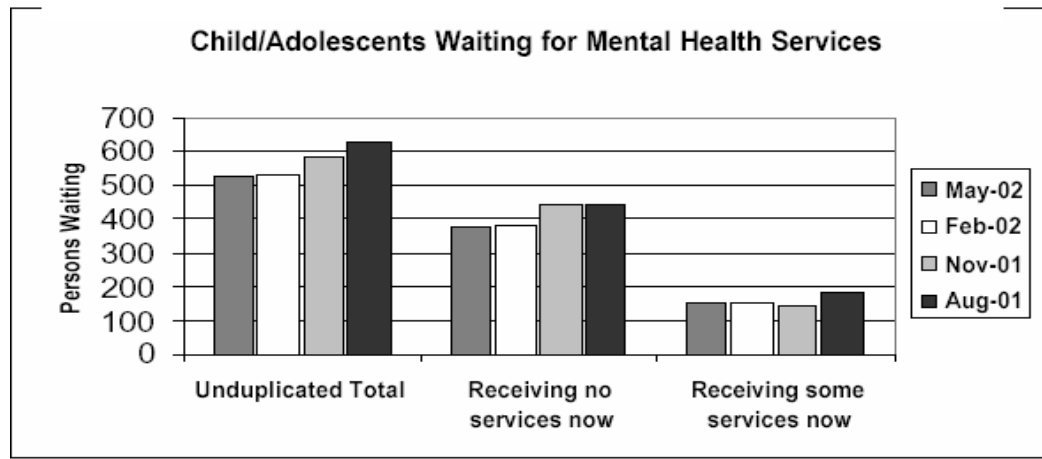
- Between 1995 and 2015, Texas will experience some of the largest (25-35%) increases in juvenile populations.
- While Texas is expected to be one of the states with the largest growth of juveniles, it is also one of the states with the highest poverty rates for juveniles. It is estimated that 17% of Travis county children live in poverty (Census 2000).
- **Travis County grew from a population of 576,407 recorded in the 1990 census to 812,280 in 2000, a 40.92% increase. More than 23% of Travis County residents are under age 18.**
- 48% of Austin Independent School District students are Hispanic and 16% are African American.

Frequently Asked Questions about Children's Mental Health

Q. Are services being accessed by all who need them?

- According to the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services, Indigent Care Collaboration CHIP Outreach Coalition, Travis County has 20,081 children under age 19 who are uninsured. Insure-a-kid reported a 3,416 enrollment increase in CHIP in Travis/Williamson Counties between October 2001 and September 2002.
- Of the children receiving treatment in Travis county, 70-80% receive care in schools (CAN Key Issues In Children's Mental Health For Children Served by the Austin Independent School District, September 2002)
- The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation reports that **only 39,000 (or 26%) of the 150,000 emotionally disturbed children qualifying for state assistance are served** (Dallas Morning News).

Texas Child/Adolescents Waiting for Mental Health Services



Source: Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation

Q: What is the suicide rate among children and adolescents?

According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- 3 million American teens have thought seriously about or even attempted suicide.
- More than 13% of young Americans between 14 and 17 years of age considered suicide in 2000 and only 36% of them had received mental health treatment and counseling (Reuters News).
- **Approximately 124 children died in Travis County in 2001, about the same number of child fatalities as occurred in 2000. Suicides, however, significantly declined with only four occurring in 2001 compared to 11 in 2000** (2002 Annual Report of The Travis County Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. and Child Fatality Review Team).

Q: What works?

- Case management/service coordination/wraparound planning to help the child and family
- Access to community resources and specialized services
- Flexible community supports, such as specialized after-school programs and mentorship by a supportive adult
- Opportunities for community involvement, such as mentors, recreational activities, transportation
- Psychiatric consultation and treatment
- Day treatment, including an educational component
- Therapeutic and specialized foster care
- In-home crisis and treatment services
- Respite care, including crisis respite

Frequently Asked Questions about Children's Mental Health

- School-based mental health services
- Out-patient sliding fee scale services

In addition to therapeutic services, prevention, and early intervention is critical to reduce the incidence of mental illness in youth. School-based prevention programs address substance abuse, social skills, and other factors contributing to the development of mental illness.

Q: What is recommended for our community?

- Increase the availability, service options, and accessibility of children's mental health services to families regardless of ability to pay.
- Implement a tracking system to identify and monitor families who are forced to relinquish custody of their child(ren) in order to have the child's mental health needs met.
- Implement best practices and incorporate cultural competence in the development of treatment plans for children with mental health needs and their families.
- Increase the number of mental health providers available to families within their own neighborhoods, communities, or schools.
- Collaborate with all entities serving children to develop a plan for diverting funding of mental health services from program/agency-based to community-based practices.
- Conduct community assessment of current numbers of children on waiting lists.
- Enable funders of mental health services to require providers make services available to juveniles with mental health needs by broadening the criteria for eligibility into services.
- Track children referred by the Juvenile Probation Department to mental health providers to determine the amount of time it takes to access care and any issues preventing juveniles from receiving services.
- Train providers on the strength-based, family-driven approach to care.
- Involve families of children with mental health needs at all levels of the community system of care: policy, practice, and service delivery.
- Implement evidenced based treatment practices.

Q: What can I do to help?

Contact the United Way Capital Area's Volunteer Center at 512-323-1898 to:

- mentor a child
- become involved in volunteerism with children in the juvenile justice system
- sponsor school-based therapy for a child

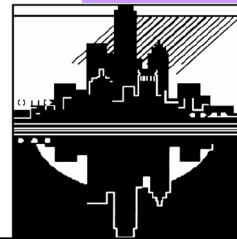
Please see the CAN Urgent Issues Action Plan at www.caction.org for additional information about specific and Community-wide approaches to addressing Health in our community.

Additional Information

To access the 2001 CAN Prescription For Wellness refer to: www.caction.org

To obtain a copy of this document, The CAN Community Overview, or any other CAN report, please visit the CAN website, email Brenda Ahrens at bahrns@austin.isd.tenet.edu, call 512-414-8203, or write to The Community Action Network, 1111 W. 6th Street, Suite B220, Austin, Texas 78703

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CAN Partners: Austin Area Human Services Association ~Austin Area Interreligious Ministries ~Austin Area Research Organization
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Community Justice Council ~Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce ~Health Partnership 2010~Higher Education Coalition
Travis County ~United Way Capital Area ~WorkSource-Greater Austin Area Workforce Board