

MITRE

**SOLVING PROBLEMS
FOR A SAFER WORLD®**



A VISION FOR MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS OF CARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES)

Conducted from January to June 2021, among students grades 9-12 attending public and private schools.

The survey found that overall

37.1% OF STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY EXPERIENCED POOR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

31.1% EXPERIENCED POOR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE 30 DAYS PRECEDING THE SURVEY

In addition, during the 12 months before the survey

44.2% OF THE TEENS REPORTED THEY HAD EXPERIENCED PERSISTENT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS

The survey found that almost

20% CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE

9% ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are facing a mental health crisis, particularly among our young people.

While there are numerous measures of this crisis, one set of indicators comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which published a one-time, online survey—the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES)—conducted from January to June 2021, among students grades 9-12 attending public and private schools.

The survey found that overall, 37.1% of students reported that they experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, and 31.1% experienced poor mental health during the 30 days preceding the survey. In addition, during the 12 months before the survey, 44.2% of the teens reported that they had experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. The survey found that almost 20% considered attempting suicide and 9.0% attempted suicide.¹

In response to these alarming statistics, numerous critical stakeholders, from government to provider organizations to advocates, have issued calls to action to address the growing mental health challenges facing our young people and their families. Dozens of reports highlight these challenges and The White House, Congress, states, and others continue to add resources and support new investments in mental health services across the country. These resources are in addition to the billions of dollars already dedicated to programs supporting the mental health of our nation's young people.

In the last fiscal year alone, Congress has taken landmark steps to address this growing and well documented mental health crisis, with additional bi-partisan draft legislation in development. In addition, the executive branch has taken significant actions to redirect funds and clarify policies to expand access to care and ensure payment policies for all categories of insurance coverage. In particular, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken numerous actions to support programs to address this critical issue.

Despite these dramatic calls to action and substantial investments in programs across the country, the nation lacks a systematic way to guide these investments and address the broad range of issues—ranging from prevention to treatment—that impact the mental health of our young people. The time has come to bring together the wide range of stakeholders to rethink our approach to mental health for young people and to develop a new vision designed to respond to this crisis.

We are at a precipice of opportunity to fundamentally improve the mental health of our young people. There is now an unprecedented political will to improve the mental health system, new and uncharted recognition of mental health problems

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and systemic inequities that drive disparities, and significant investments by federal, state and local governments, as well as other organizations. MITRE stands ready to support this momentum and offers a vision of a foundation for an evidence-based youth mental health system that brings together federal agencies, states, and communities to systematically address this urgent issue.

In his first State of the Union Address, President Biden noted that:

“Our country faces an unprecedented mental health crisis among people of all ages. Two out of five adults report symptoms of anxiety or depression. And Black and Brown communities are disproportionately undertreated—even as their burden of mental illness has continued to rise. Even before the pandemic, rates of depression and anxiety were inching higher. But the grief, trauma, and physical isolation of the last two years have driven Americans to a breaking point.

Our youth have been particularly impacted as losses from the pandemic and disruptions in routines and relationships have led to increased social isolation, anxiety, and learning loss. More than half of parents express concern over their children’s mental well-being. In 2019, one in three high school students and half of female students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, an overall increase of 40 percent from 2009. Emergency department visits for attempted suicide have risen 51 percent among adolescent girls.”

**THERE IS ALSO
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A WHOLE-OF-NATION APPROACH TO A MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

While numerous federal agencies, states, and localities are developing and implementing their own strategies to address this crisis, this report instead takes a “whole-of-nation” approach that looks beyond any one government agency and offers a complete reimagination of the way we address mental health among our young people. It builds on the ongoing calls to action and the work of numerous federal agencies, states, and localities as well as a broad range of investments in new and current programs designed to serve young people.

The objective of this report is to develop a strategic vision for federal, state, and local organizations to come together to more effectively utilize federal grant programs, as well as public and private coverage and payment programs. Our vision of an effective and equitable system is broad and designed to improve mental health prevention, access, services, and outcomes for young people and their families.

In addition, the report details new legislation and investments designed to address the current crisis. Finally, the report describes challenges and opportunities to immediately begin to improve the impact of current investments, as we move toward a system that meets the needs of our young people.

This report represents a snapshot at a time when, on a daily basis, new information is being published, new legislation is being proposed and implemented, and new understandings of the problems and solutions are being offered. By consolidating the vast array of information into some common themes, this strategic vision offers opportunities for near- and long-term solutions to the urgent problem of youth mental health.

KEY QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE A PATH FORWARD

Individuals, families, communities, providers, and advocates generally acknowledge that the mental health system for young people needs to be re-envisioned and redesigned to prevent mental health conditions and to better serve the needs of young people. There is also broad consensus that the need to redesign the mental health system is urgent.

A beginning step in reimagining an impactful system to serve our young people and their families is to identify the questions that should be addressed by every component of the current system and by those committed to designing a system that truly meets the needs of our young people.

To begin this process, there are several key questions for all stakeholders to consider:

The Broad Vision and Principles

- What should a mental health system in 2023 and beyond look like for young people?
- Who should we be serving in this mental health system?
- How do we build a workforce that meets mental health needs?
- How do we assure a system that is equitable and serves the unique needs of each individual?
- How do we address the social determinants of mental health in interventions and payments?

How the Mental Health System Works

- How do we organize core prevention and behavioral health services for young people?
- Where should interventions be provided and by whom?
- How can we ensure consistent, reliable linkages across service sectors?
- How do we shift from demonstrations of efficacious clinical practices and best system and policy practices to widespread sustainable adoption?

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The Funding and Payment Model

- What should we be buying and investing in for young people's mental health?
- How should we be paying for this system?
- How can federal funding and policy, combined with private sector mental health parity, support and sustain a high quality, modern mental health system for young people?

Evaluation and Accountability

- How can we assure quality of care?
- What data should be routinely collected to better understand the problems and evaluate the efficacy of interventions?

VISION FOR AN IMPROVED SYSTEM

As we continue to invest billions of dollars to care for our young people, we are utilizing the same traditional approaches to funding and building “systems of care” that are not meeting the needs of our young people.

We are at an unprecedented time, when every stakeholder, from the federal government to states and providers, as well as young people and their families, are demanding action.

Expectations are increasing that our significant federal investments, innovation, and technology must help improve the mental health of our young people and ensure a generation that benefits from mental well-being.

We may never again see a consensus across every sector to act now. There is also fundamental agreement that the current system is not working for our young people and their families concluding that:

- We cannot continue to invest in silos.
- We cannot continue to focus our funding on those with serious mental illness.
- We cannot sacrifice prevention to support treatment.

We must act now to promote health and well-being and provide access to care for all young people before the moment passes. This report lays out a call to action and recommends short term actions and a longer-term vision that is designed to initiate a constructive dialogue at many levels of the health system for moving forward with a more effective and accessible system. MITRE presents this vision to reimagine and build a future generation of resilient, healthy young adults.

Building on this fundamental consensus as well as our review of current strategies, new investments, and consideration of key questions for all stakeholders, we have identified **14 critical elements for a re-envisioned mental health system.**

THE BROAD VISION AND PRINCIPLES	HOW THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM WORKS	THE FUNDING AND PAYMENT MODEL	EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>1 Use a public health approach focusing on mental health promotion, prevention, early identification and intervention, treatment, and recovery supports.</p> <p>2 Elevate family and youth-driven care.</p> <p>3 Focus on equity.</p> <p>4 Address the Social Determinants of Mental Health.</p>	<p>5 Expand the workforce serving children and young people.</p> <p>6 Develop a comprehensive coordinated array of readily accessible services and supports.</p> <p>7 Build on technology as essential infrastructure and a mechanism to improve access and delivery of care.</p> <p>8 Ensure that timely innovations in mental health include a focus on children and young people.</p>	<p>9 Implement financing and payment systems to ensure a robust young people-focused benefit design.</p> <p>10 Align federal funding and policies to optimize a mental health system for young people.</p> <p>11 Re-establish an expectation in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Mental Health Block Grant that states submit a plan for children and young people's mental health.</p>	<p>12 Establish data standards, quality, and accountability in prevention, clinical care, and system performance.</p> <p>13 Encourage a state governance structure for children and young people's mental health.</p> <p>14 Designate a federal coordinator/unified plan for the behavioral health of young people.</p>

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