



MORE FUNDING NEEDED AT CDC TO ADDRESS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

New Center Would Coordinate Public Health Approach to Adolescent Mental Health Crisis

Program	Appropriations Bill	Agency	FY22	FY23 MHA Recommendation
Adolescent Mental Health Coordinating Center	Labor-HHS	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	\$0	\$25 million

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents in the U.S. began to experience greater rates of mental health problems. In 2019, data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicated that 16% of youth ages 12-17 reported experiencing a past-year major depressive episode (MDE), compared to 8% in 2009. Deaths by suicide among youth increased over 30% between 2014 and 2017, and suicide continues to be the second leading cause of death for youth. These numbers mask racial and ethnic disparities, including that Black and Latinx children are less likely than white youth to receive treatment for their depression, though are no less likely to have major depressive disorder.

The pandemic has only made the situation worse. The Surgeon General recently issued an [advisory](#) on protecting youth mental health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Adolescent and Child Psychiatry, and the Children’s Hospital Association have [declared](#) a national emergency in children’s mental health.

Importance of Public Health: For most health crises facing the nation, the federal government takes a public health approach in addition to providing services to individuals. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) spent almost \$500 million in FY21 to address substance use and addiction, using population-based strategies to complement services provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS). To date, however, CDC has not been fully empowered to address the youth mental health crisis. While CDC runs several programs that touch on this issue, most are small and scattered across various national centers within the agency.

Funding Recommendation: Congress should provide \$25 million in FY23 to establish an Adolescent Mental Health Coordinating Center at CDC. In the explanatory statement accompanying the FY22 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, Congress urged CDC “to establish a program that leverages existing CDC activities dedicated to adolescent mental health to develop and implement national goals and a national strategy to improve adolescent mental wellbeing and advance equity, with a focus on culturally responsive prevention and early intervention. CDC is urged to coordinate with other Federal agencies and departments, as appropriate.” This funding request would fund these efforts.

Activities should include:

- Developing a strategic plan for CDC to address adolescent mental health that incorporates population health approaches and primary prevention that is inclusive of health equity issues;
- Coordinating the various CDC units that support mental health initiatives and activities (i.e., suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, at-risk populations);
- Coordinating with other federal agencies, including SAMHSA, Department of Education, and the Surgeon General;
- Collecting and integrating data on school policies and practices that support student and staff physical and emotional well-being and positive mental health and wellness;
- Conducting applied research and evaluation studies to monitor and assess the implementation of evidence-based practices;
- Developing and disseminating best practices for the field; and
- Engaging key stakeholders to expand the reach of CDC prevention efforts by funding non-governmental organizations to increase subject matter expertise, provide professional development tools and technical assistance to schools, and improve mental health infrastructure support.

Current CDC activities to address the youth mental health crisis include the following: The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion funds state education agencies to implement whole-school frameworks to address child and family health, with a growing focus on emotional well-being; the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control supports public health departments in developing strategies to prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and self-harm; the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention funds local education agencies to implement transformational approaches that enhance student belonging as part of mental well-being; the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities supports important work on ADHD, Tourette syndrome, and overall healthcare reform for children's mental health; and CDC conducts critical surveillance and research on suicide and mental health that informs the nation's work.

About Mental Health America: MHA is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all. MHA's national office and its state and local affiliates are driven by a commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all; early identification and intervention for those at risk; integrated care, services, and supports for those who need them; with recovery as the goal.

Contact: Mary Giliberti, Chief Public Policy Officer, Mental Health America

Email: mgiliberti@mhanational.org Phone: 571-400-1299