Mental Health and Our Children

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Today’s Agenda

- Mental Health Landscape for Children & Teens
- COVID’s Impact on Youth Mental Health
- Most Common Mental Illnesses in Children & Teens and What They Look Like
- Finding Help and Mental Health Crisis Response
- Insurance Parity
- NAMI Programs
- Q & A
The Youth Mental Health Landscape

2020 Mental Health By the Numbers

13% of youth, age 8-15, live with mental illness severe enough to cause impairment in daily life

50% of lifetime cases of MI begin by age 14

50% of youth with MI receive treatment

Source: NAMI
COVID’s Impact on Youth Mental Health

2020
Mental Health
By the Numbers

Youth and young adults experienced a unique set of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic - isolation from peers, adapting to virtual learning, and changes to sleep habits and other routines.

1 in 5 young people report that the pandemic had a significant negative impact on their mental health.

18% of adolescents
23% of young adults

NEARLY 1/2 of young people with mental health concerns report a significant negative impact.

1 in 10 people under age 18 experience a mental health condition following a COVID-19 diagnosis.
Signs of Mental Health Challenges in Youth

- Disruptions to daily routines and interactions with others
- Anxiety or stress out of proportion to the reality of the risk
- Ongoing feelings of depression
- Substance abuse
- Changes in performance at school
- Difficulties adjusting to challenges or changes
- Other symptoms that may be related to particular disorders

Important: These illnesses are biological in nature and not the fault of the young person with the illness nor the parents.
ADD/ADHD: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- Neurobiological disorder that typically presents by age 12
- Inattentive Presentation:
  - Can’t pay attention to details, don’t follow instructions, daydream
  - Seem forgetful, absent-minded, disorganized
- Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation
  - Extreme physical agitation: fidgets, can’t sit still, interrupts
  - On the go as if driven by a motor, particularly when inappropriate
  - In trouble at school
  - High risk for alcohol/drug abuse in adolescents

To be diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, symptoms have to be present for 6 months, interfere with child’s functioning or development, and cause significant impairment at home, at school, or in outside activities.

Source for illness info: DSM-5
Anxiety Disorders

- Cause extreme discomfort to the child in situations generally seen as non-threatening, leading to dread and worry
- Key warning sign: Not wanting to go to school
- Most common forms of anxiety disorder in youth are
  - Separation Anxiety: don’t want to be separated from parents
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder: excessive worry, perfectionism, overly serious
  - Social Anxiety Disorder: won’t make friends, doesn’t like being singled out
- From families:
  - Meltdowns occur if child put in anxiety-causing situation
  - Accommodating anxious behavior can lead to missing too much school, but insisting on school attendance and social contacts results in recurring instances of high anxiety
Depressive Disorders

- Symptoms of childhood depression can be as severe as those in adults but manifest differently
  - Irritability, aggressiveness, combativeness
  - Complaints of physical symptoms that can’t be medically confirmed
  - Drop in grades, refusing to do homework or go to school
  - Inability to have fun; withdraw, won’t participate in activities
  - Low self-esteem

- In adolescents, symptoms can include:
  - Feeling sad, hopeless, empty, and lethargic
  - Become antisocial/isolated: “no one understands,” “people look down on me”
  - High-risk activities of self medicating
  - Increased risk for suicide
Other Disorders

- Bipolar disorder: Manic highs and depressive lows
- Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder: Chronic, severe irritability + temper outbursts and angry mood between outbursts
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Recurrence of senseless, intrusive, anxiety-producing thoughts/impulses (obsession) which the child tries to ward off with a rigid, irrational behaviors (compulsion)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) & Conduct Disorder (CD): Disobedience that grossly violates accepted norms for children; core symptoms are inflexibility in ODD and physical aggression or cruelty in CD
Finding Help & Mental Health Crisis Response

- Start with child’s pediatrician
  - Some have counselors on staff
  - Most can refer to a preferred clinician
- Get appointment for your child with school counselor, therapist, or nurse
- Reach out to others who may have been in a similar situation for recommendations
- If there’s a crisis (immediate concern for individual’s or others’ safety)
  - Go to hospital emergency room
  - Call 911 and request assistance from Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) Officer
Insurance

- Investigate coverage for mental health conditions in your insurance policy
- The good news is that Illinois is one of the leaders in mental health insurance parity: If your carrier offers behavioral health coverage, it cannot cover mental health conditions in a way different from physical conditions
  - Same deductibles and co-pays
  - Same lifetime $ limits
  - Same number of allowable visits
NAMI Programs

Support
- NAMI Family Support Group
- NAMI Connection

Education
- NAMI Basics
  For parents of children up to about age 16-18
- NAMI Family-to-Family
  For parents/other family members of someone over 16
- NAMI Peer-to-Peer
  Education program for those living with a mental illness;
  Must be 18+ to participate

Awareness
- NAMI Ending the Silence
  In-school program for students, staff, and families

Must be 18+ to participate
Also have LGBTQ+ Connection group
Resources

- To find virtual support groups, local affiliates, and information on mental illness: [namiillinois.org](http://namiillinois.org)

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

- Transgender Suicide Hotline: 877-565-8860

- Groups for survivors of suicide: [https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group](https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group)

- For mental health support and/or substance abuse issue, through IL Dept. of Human Services: 866-359-7953

- The Trevor Project, for LGBTQ youth in crisis: 866-488-7386

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline: 800-662-4537 or 800-958-5990

- To sign up for NAMI Basics on Demand: [https://nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Basics](https://nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Basics)
Questions & Answers

Thank you to The Arc of Illinois for the opportunity to talk about mental health in our children today

Time for questions . . .