



Children's Mental Health Fact Sheet

How big is the issue?

- During the course of a year, 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental disorder.ⁱ
- While most of these disorders can be treated, less than 25% of these children get the help they need.ⁱⁱ
- One in 10 children and adolescents suffer from a mental illness severe enough to result in significant functional impairment.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ***More than 7.5 million children under the age of 18 in the U.S. have a mental illness severe enough to result in significant functional impairment – this is the equivalent of almost 4 times the number of prisoners in all Federal and State Prisons, and local jails combined!***^{iv}
- Children with mental disorders, particularly depression, are at a higher risk for suicide. According to the Surgeon General, an estimated 90% of children who commit suicide have a mental disorder.^v
- According to the World Health Organization, in the U.S. alone in 2002 there were 4,268 suicides for people ages 5-24.
- ***Youth suicide occurs at a rate equal to more than one MD-88 jet airliner crashing and killing everyone on board every 2 weeks!***
- Yet, 79% of children aged 6 to 17 with mental disorders do not get the help they need.^{vi}

Untreated, these mental health issues can have devastating impact on lives

- Ineffective, unsafe, or no treatment for children with mental health issues has serious negative consequences, including school drop out, child welfare and juvenile justice involvement.^{vii}
- ***It is estimated that 66% of boys and almost 75% of girls in juvenile detention have at least one mental disorder.***^{viii}
- Eighty percent of people with multiple mental health and substance abuse disorders report onset before the age of 20.^{ix}
- Four of the 10 leading causes of disability are mental disorders for persons over 5 years of age.^x

ⁱ Blueprint for Change: Research on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Report of the National Advisory Mental Health Council's Workgroup on Child and Adolescent Mental Health NIH Publication No. 01-4896. 2001

ⁱⁱ National Research Council; 1996 and US Census Bureau; 2004 and Bureau of Justice Statistics; 2006

ⁱⁱⁱ DHHS; 1999. Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General

^{iv} Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Facts on Children's Mental Health; 2007

^v Institute of Medicine; 2006

^{vi} President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. 2003. Final Report to the President.

^{vii} Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Facts on Co-Occurring Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Disorders in Children and Adolescents; 2007

^{viii} DHHS; 1999

What can you do about this today?

The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health asks for your help in reducing the stigma that prevents many families from seeking help, having the social and emotional support they need, having access to critical services and from insurance companies providing adequate coverage for mental health services. This list unfortunately goes on and on.

- Please wear a green ribbon to raise awareness.
- Please share this information.
- Please incorporate mental health into all of your health related discussions.

***Mental health is a critical component of overall health.
A child's life may depend on it.***