



Youth Mental Health CRISIS

In 2019,
9% of
youth in high school
attempted suicide

The Casey Foundation's [2022 Kids Count Data Book](#) is a collection of data in four domains that capture the essence of children's mental health and well-being. Economic well-being, education, health, and family and community are indicators of mental health. It is the hope of the Casey Foundation that policymakers use this data to inform actions aimed at improving the mental well-being of children and families.

Overall, the most recent data available (2016-2020) indicates improvements in most domains. Fewer children were living in poverty, more children graduated high school on time, and the teen birth rate was lower. However, several areas in the health domain are concerning – more babies were born with low birth weights, more children and teens were overweight or obese, and most notably, there was an increase in child and teen deaths. The only indicator within the health domain indicating progress was a reduction in the number of children without health insurance. In general, children in Southern states fare worse across all domains.

The [National Survey of Children's Health](#) indicates the toll the pandemic has taken on youth's mental health. **The number of kids (ages 3 to 17) struggling with anxiety or depression jumped by more than 1.5 million, from 5.8 million to 7.3 million (or roughly 9% to 12%) from 2016 to 2020.** These statistics reflect children diagnosed with or reported to have anxiety or depression by a health care provider. They do not include children who did not seek mental health services. A recent survey of LGBTQ young people (ages 13-24) indicated many wanted mental health services but did not access services, nearly half indicating fear of discussing their concerns.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

An alarming 9% of high schoolers attempted suicide in 2019.

The disproportionate number of children of color who attempted suicide is even more disturbing.

Suicide Attempts by High School Students - 2019			
	American Indian/Alaska Native Students	Black Students	Students of two or more races
Percentage of Students	25%	12%	13%

Racial inequities in child well-being persist. As children of color make up most of the child population, it's paramount that we ensure all children have the opportunities and support necessary to thrive.

CALL TO ACTION

The Casey Foundation calls policymakers to action, offering the following recommendations for addressing the nation's ongoing youth mental health crisis:

- **Meeting children's basic needs should take priority**
Youth in poverty are two to three times more likely to develop mental health conditions than their peers. Food, housing, and financial stability are necessary components of positive mental health and well-being.
- **All children should have easy access to mental health care**
Every child should have health insurance and every school should have mental health professionals on staff and available to children.
- **Mental health care should account for youth's different experiences and identities**
Mental health programs should build on the child and family's strengths and self-identified cultural traditions. Services should meet the needs of EVERY child, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, or socioeconomic status.



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This document was developed under the Mental Health Initiative: Phase II Grant #SJI-20-P-054 from the State Justice Institute and approved by the Task Force Executive Committee. The points of view expressed do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.