

Children's Mental Health

DEFINITION

Children's mental health is the number of acute care hospitalizations of children under age 18 with a primary diagnosis of a mental disorder. Hospitalization is the most intensive type of treatment for mental disorders and represents only one type of treatment category on a broad continuum available to children with mental health problems in Rhode Island.

SIGNIFICANCE

Mental health in childhood and adolescence is defined as the achievement of expected developmental, cognitive, social, and emotional milestones and the ability to use effective coping skills. Mental health status influences children's health and behavior at home, in child care or school, and in the community. Mental health conditions can impair daily functioning, prevent or affect academic achievement, increase involvement with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, result in high treatment costs, diminish family incomes, and increase the risk for suicide. Children with mental health issues are also likely to have other chronic health conditions.^{1,2,3,4}

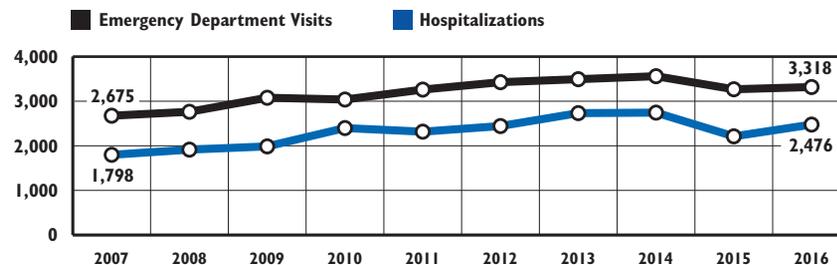
Mental health problems affect children of all backgrounds. Nationally, 10% of children under age five experience a significant mental health issue.⁵ In Rhode Island, one in five (19.0%) children ages six to 17 has a

diagnosable mental health problem; one in ten (9.8%) has significant functional impairment.⁶

Risk factors for childhood mental disorders include prenatal exposure to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; low birthweight; abuse and neglect; toxic stress; a family history of mental health issues and/or an inherited predisposition to a mental disorder; involvement with juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and living in poverty.^{7,8,9}

Mental health treatment systems tend to be fragmented and crisis-driven with disproportionate spending on high-end care and often lack adequate investments in prevention and community-based services.^{10,11,12} In Rhode Island, an estimated 55% of children ages three to 17 who needed mental health treatment or counseling had a problem obtaining needed care.¹³ In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017, 462 Rhode Island children and youth awaited psychiatric inpatient admission for an average of four days on medical floors at Hasbro Children's Hospital. This is up from 212 children and three days in FFY 2016. Also during that time, an average of nine children per day were ready to leave the psychiatric hospital (up from the FFY 2016 average of six kids per day), but were unable due to a lack of step-down availability or there being no other safe placement (including at home).^{14,15}

Emergency Care for Primary Diagnosis of Mental Disorder, Children Under Age 18, Rhode Island, 2007-2016*



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2007-2016. *Data are for emergency department visits and hospitalizations, not children. Children may visit emergency department or be hospitalized more than once. Trend line is comparable to Factbooks since 2012. Note: Effective October 1, 2015, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes changed from the 9th to the 10th classification, which may impact comparability across the years.

◆ In 2016, there were 3,318 emergency department visits and 2,476 hospitalizations of Rhode Island children with a primary diagnosis of mental disorder. Between 2007 and 2016, emergency department visits increased 24% and hospitalizations increased 38%.¹⁶

Type of Care for Primary Diagnosis of Mental Disorder by Select Subgroups, Children Under Age 18, Rhode Island, 2016

	EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS		HOSPITALIZATIONS	
	#	%	#	%
Female	1,789	54%	1,395	56%
Male	1,529	46%	1,081	44%
Age 6 and Under	129	4%	92	4%
Age 7-12	755	23%	620	25%
Age 13-17	2,434	73%	1,764	71%
Medicaid/Rite Care	2,063	62%	1,305	53%
Commercial Insurance	1,100	33%	1,119	45%
Black	319	10%	209	8%
White	2,116	64%	1,622	66%
Hispanic*	691	21%	464	19%
TOTAL	3,318		2,476	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2016. Totals may not sum to 100% due to small categories not being reported. *Hispanic children can be of any race. Note: Effective October 1, 2015, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes changed from the 9th to the 10th classification, which may impact comparability across the years.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Children Under Age 19 Treated at Rhode Island Psychiatric Hospitals, October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017 (FFY 2017)

	BRADLEY HOSPITAL GENERAL PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES		BRADLEY HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PROGRAM		BUTLER HOSPITAL ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES	
	# TREATED	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY	# TREATED	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY	# TREATED	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY
Inpatient	791	21 days	116	38 days	509*	8 days
Residential	41	235 days	34	238 days	--	--
Partial Hospitalization	824	20 visits	102	20 visits	166	5 visits
Home-Based	0	0	20	27 visits	--	--
Outpatient	1,609**	**	**	**	55	NA

Source: Lifespan, 2016-2017 and Butler Hospital, 2016-2017. Programs can have overlapping enrollment. Number treated is based on the hospital census (i.e., the number of patients seen in any program during FFY 2017). The average length of stay is based on discharges. *An additional 81 youth were treated in adult programs. **Only total number treated with outpatient services by the Lifespan Physician Group is available for Bradley Hospital this year.

-- = Service not offered. NA = Data not available for this service.

◆ The two hospitals in Rhode Island that specialize in providing psychiatric care to children and youth are Bradley Hospital and Butler Hospital. Inpatient treatment at a psychiatric hospital is the most intensive type of mental health care. The most common diagnoses for youth treated at Butler or Bradley Hospitals in FFY 2017 in an inpatient setting were depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, adjustment disorders, bipolar disorders, and schizophrenia.^{18,19}

◆ Bradley Hospital has a Developmental Disabilities Program that offers highly specialized inpatient and residential services to children and adolescents who show signs of serious emotional and behavioral problems in addition to developmental disabilities. Lifespan School Solutions owns and operates six Bradley schools and eight community based classrooms/public school partnerships for children with behavioral health problems and developmental disabilities. Together, the programs had an average daily enrollment of 348 students in FFY 2017. Lifespan School Solutions previously operated the East Providence High School partnership program and the Martin Middle School Program, which were closed in 2017.²⁰

Children with Medicaid and RIte Care with a Mental Health Diagnosis

◆ In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2017, 21% (25,084) of children under age 19 enrolled in Medicaid/RIte Care had a mental health diagnosis, including but not limited to anxiety, alcohol/drug dependence, or psychosis as well as depressive, mood, and personality disorders. Of those children with a mental health diagnosis, 21% were ages 6 and under, 39% were ages seven to 12, and 40% were ages 13 to 18. In addition, 41% were females and 59% were males.²¹

◆ In SFY 2017, 1,168 children under age 19 enrolled in Medicaid/RIte Care were hospitalized due a mental health related condition (up from 983 in SFY 2016) and 2,401 children had a mental health related emergency department visit (up from 1,690 in SFY 2016). Ninety-one percent of those mental health-related emergency department visits did not result in a hospitalization.²²

Suicide Among Rhode Island Children and Youth

◆ Children and youth with mental health conditions are at increased risk for suicide.²³ In 2017, 11% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times during the past year.²⁴ In Rhode Island between 2012 and 2016, there were 864 emergency department visits and 522 hospitalizations of youth ages 13-19 due to suicide attempts. Twenty-two children under age 20 died due to suicide in Rhode Island between 2012-2016.²⁵

Rhode Island's Community Mental Health Organizations

◆ The six Community Mental Health Organizations (CMHOs) in Rhode Island are the primary source of public mental health treatment services available in the state for children and adults. During 2017, 4,506 children under age 18 were treated at CMHOs, and 3,915 children were receiving treatment as of December 31, 2017.²⁶

References

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Mental health surveillance among children: United States, 2005-2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 62(Supp.2):1-35.

^{2,23} Murphey, D., Barry, M., & Vaughn, B. (2013). *Adolescent health highlight: Mental health disorders*. (Publication No. 2013-1). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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