

Children's Mental Health

DEFINITION

Children's mental health is the number of children under age 18 using the mental health treatment system in Rhode Island.

SIGNIFICANCE

Mental health in childhood and adolescence is defined by the U.S. Surgeon General as the achievement of expected developmental, cognitive, social and emotional milestones and by secure attachments, satisfying social relationships, and effective coping skills.¹ One in five U.S. children ages 9 to 17 has a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder. One in ten suffers significant functional impairment as a result of their disorders.² Of all U.S. children with some mental or emotional problem or functional limitation it is estimated that only 19% see a mental health provider on a regular basis.³ Children and youth with severe emotional disturbances who do not get early screening and prevention services are more likely to live in poverty and be dependent on the adult mental health system.⁴

Mental health problems affect children of all backgrounds. Children at risk for developing a mental disorder or experiencing problems in social-emotional development include those with prenatal damage from exposure to alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco;

those born with low birth weight, difficult temperament, or an inherited predisposition to a mental disorder; children with external risk factors such as poverty, deprivation, abuse and neglect, unsatisfactory relationships, or exposure to traumatic events; and children whose parent has a mental health or substance abuse disorder.⁵

Both nationally and in Rhode Island, mental health systems tend to be crisis-driven with disproportionate spending on high-end hospital care and inadequate investment in prevention and a continuum of community services.^{6,7,8} Children with mental health needs can be found in nearly every system serving children.

Primary health care settings and the schools are important sites for the identification of children with mental health needs and provide opportunities for early intervention.⁹

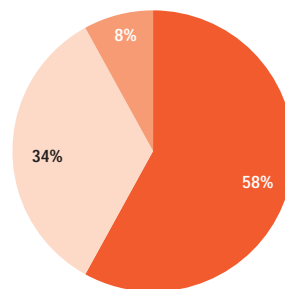
Nationally, the public school system is the sole provider of services for nearly half of all children receiving mental health services.¹⁰ School systems are mandated to provide special education services to children and adolescents whose disabilities interfere with their education.¹¹ In the 2001-2002 school year, there were 2,857 Rhode Island children between the ages of 3 and 21 identified within the special education system as being disabled because of behavioral disorders.¹²

Rhode Island's Community Mental Health Centers

◆ During 2002, the eight community mental health centers in Rhode Island treated 7,924 children. As of December 31, 2002, there were 3,443 children receiving services through the community mental health centers.

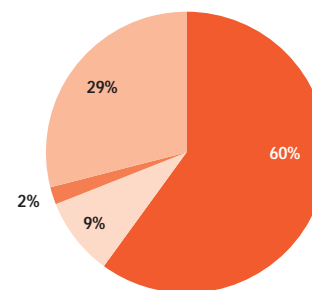
By Age

- 58% Ages 12 to 17
- 34% Ages 6 to 11
- 8% Under Age 6



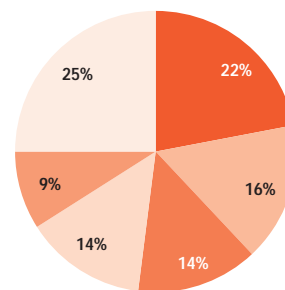
By Race

- 60% White
- 9% Black
- 2% American Indian/Pacific Islander
- 29% Unknown



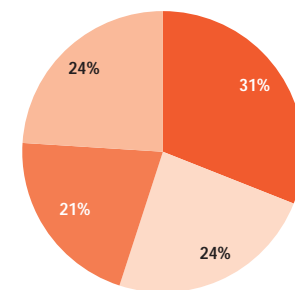
By Primary Diagnosis

- 22% Attention Deficit Disorder
- 16% Depressive or Mood Disorders
- 14% Conduct Disorder
- 14% Unknown
- 9% Anxiety Disorders
- 25% Other Disorders



By Primary Payment Source

- 31% RIte Care
- 24% Medicaid Fee-for-Service
- 21% Commercial Insurance
- 24% Self-pay/Other



n=7,924

Source: Rhode Island Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospital, data from eight community mental health centers, January-December 2002. Data for one month is missing for one mental health center.



Hospitals

◆ In calendar year 2000, 12,062 children were enrolled in fee-for-service Medical Assistance by virtue of SSI eligibility (45%), subsidized/special needs adoptions (38%), Katie Beckett eligibility (8%) and DCYF out-of-home placement (8%).¹³ The annual hospitalization rate for these children was 173 per 1,000. Children in DCYF out-of-home placement had a rate of 262 hospitalizations per 1,000. Nine out of ten hospitalizations of children in out-of-home placement were for mental disorders.¹⁴

◆ Bradley Hospital is Rhode Island's largest psychiatric center for children. In fiscal year 2002, 5,796 outpatient psychiatric visits were provided to children and there were 833 admissions of children to the hospital. An average of 40 families per day were served through Bradley's home-based program and an average of 156 students per day were served at Bradley's schools for children with mental illness and developmental disabilities. Bradley Hospital also serves children in partial hospital and residential treatment programs.¹⁵

◆ In fiscal year 2002, Rhode Island Hospital provided 12,484 child psychiatry outpatient visits and served 165 children and youth with medical/psychiatric conditions in its Hasbro Partial Hospital Program.¹⁶

◆ Butler Hospital provides a wide range of psychiatric services for children and adolescents. In 2002, Butler Hospital provided services to 876 children and youth age 18 and under, as compared with 1,179 in the previous year and 2,338 in 2000. Of the 876 children served in 2002, 724 were admitted to the hospital and the remaining 152 were in partial hospital or outpatient programs.¹⁷



Supporting Families of Children with Mental Illness

◆ The family caregivers of children with mental health issues are likely to feel isolated, pushed to the breaking point, and unsupported by friends, families, or the health and education systems.^{18,19}

◆ In a 1998 Rhode Island survey of family caregivers of mentally ill children:

83% reported feeling overwhelmed.

74% were unable to find child care appropriate to their child's needs.

81% lacked information on their child's primary condition.

99% reported a need for parent education classes.

99% reported a need for respite care.²⁰

◆ A growing body of research and practice indicates that a comprehensive mental health system for children needs to include: multiple and diverse support systems for families, skill-building for parents, teachers and other caregivers, and prevention and treatment provided in natural settings, such as homes, schools, child care centers and community organizations.^{21,22,23,24}

References

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- ³ *Mental Health, United States, 2000* (2000). Washington, DC: Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
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- ⁷ *Toward an Organized System of Care for Rhode Island's Children, Youth and Families* (October 21, 2002). The Report of the Rhode Island System of Care Task Force.
- ^{8,23} *A Review of the Department of Children, Youth and Families* (January 2001). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, Commissioned by Rhode Island Children's Policy Coalition.
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- ¹⁰ *School-Based Health Centers in Rhode Island* (2000). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.
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- ^{13,14} *Rhode Island Medicaid Program, Fiscal Year 2002, Annual Report* (2002). Cranston, RI: Department of Human Services.
- ¹⁵ Bradley Hospital, fiscal year 2002.
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- ¹⁷ Butler Hospital, 2000, 2001, 2002.
- ¹⁸ *Families on the Brink: The Impact of Ignoring Children with Serious Mental Illness: Results of a National Survey of Parents and Other Caregivers* (1999). The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.
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