

School Mental Health Professionals and The Child Mental Health Crisis

Our children are facing a mental health crisis. It is incumbent upon our leaders to meet kids where they are, with effective support from trained professionals.

Building on legislative investments

The state legislature made a great start by passing youth suicide prevention training and protocols for schools in 2020 and investing in school psychologists in the last budget. Now we need to continue building on these investments to put the staffing in place to meet kids' needs.

A generation in crisis

North Carolina's youth and children are in crisis, with suicide now the leading cause of death among youth ages 10-14 in our state. One in five North Carolina high school students reported seriously considering attempting suicide in 2021, up from 16% in 2017. One in ten reported actually making an attempt.ⁱ An unprecedented 67 children (ages 0-18) died by suicide in our state in 2020.ⁱⁱ

More than one in 10 children ages 3 to 17 in North Carolina had a diagnosis of depression or anxiety in 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ

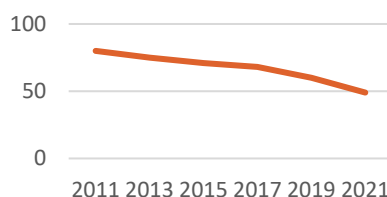
These numbers are a wake-up call for adults to make sure we put the resources in place to meet our kids' health needs – and that includes mental health.



A Long-Term Trend

Long before pandemic school closures, we saw alarming trends in measures of young people's mental health. For instance, the number of North Carolina high schoolers who said they felt good about themselves fell from 80% in 2011 to 49% in 2021.^{iv}

Percent of high schoolers who said they felt good about themselves



Source: NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Meeting kids where they are

It's time to get struggling kids back to health by putting the resources in place where they spend most of their time – at school. When kids are in crisis, it's essential they get effective support from trained health professionals who can partner with parents to provide the support kids need.

School is one of the most important places where we support children's mental health. We need to meet kids where they are – and they are at school every day. That means putting more funding into school nurses, counselors, social workers, and other trained adults who know how to help kids in crisis.

Sources

ⁱ NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey qtd. North Carolina Healthy Schools Whole Child Update, January 2023

ⁱⁱ *Youth Suicides on the rise in North Carolina, Child Fatality Task Force reports*, EdNC, December 6, 2021

^{iv} NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey qtd. North Carolina Healthy Schools Whole Child Update, January 2023

ⁱⁱⁱ 2022 KIDSCOUNT Databook from the Annie E. Casey Foundation: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2022-kids-count-data-book>