BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT MONROE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Children and youth today face increased mental health challenges. Complex interactions between physical, emotional, and mental health affect children's abilities to develop healthy relationships, focus at school, and explore the world around them. Inequities persist particularly among children living in poverty, children of color, those identifying as LGBTQ, immigrants and English language learners. They also persist among those with physical, developmental, and/or intellectual disabilities, and those with chronic medical conditions.

Why Focus Here?

**Mental and behavioral health conditions are a growing concern among children and youth:**

- 28% of youth had a behavioral health diagnosis in 2023 (up from 23% in 2016)[1]

- 58% of high school survey respondents reported one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with 18% experiencing three or more ACEs[2]

- Intentional self-harm is the most common behavioral health reason that children and youth (ages 0-21) go to the emergency department[3]

Exposure to early adversity impacts lifelong health: Our earliest experiences and relationships set the trajectory for long-term health outcomes by creating pathways for future behavior, responses, and actions. Children and youth who experience stress, trauma, and lack of parent responsiveness early in life often display symptoms of mental health challenges.

This brief is part of a Behavioral Health Needs Assessment completed in July 2025. This is one of six issue briefs summarizing findings.

All issue briefs, along with the full assessment, are available online at **commongroundhealth.org /bhna25***.*

Scan the QR code below with your phone camera to access these resources.

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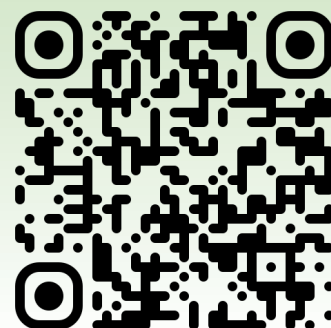
Pandemic-related measures affected child development: Sudden and drastic disruptions to routines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic had unique effects on children and youth. Examples include:

- Speech and language delays in toddlers that manifest as behavior issues
- Challenges with remote learning
- Isolation resulting in delayed social development and missed milestones
- Impacts of living with parents facing increased stress, depression, and anxiety

Smartphone and social media use is increasing: An increased online presence is linked to negative mental health outcomes among children and youth. Students reported difficulties disengaging from social media and used it as a way to escape negative feelings.

Access to mental health care is limited and inequitable: Providers and families are not always aware of existing care options. Services remain difficult to access and navigate, especially for people facing barriers related to social drivers of health. Inequities in accessing care persist with Medicaid populations having lower follow-up rates than children and youth with commercial insurance.

Key Opportunities

Promote Early Detection and Prevention: Screening children and youth regularly can help identify mental health challenges before the need for more intense levels of care. Standard procedures after positive screenings are necessary to ensure timely follow-up care. Additionally, prevention-based programming focused on resiliency and life skills for youth is needed.

Provide Additional Training: Enhance training for professionals working with children and youth by incorporating information on infant and early childhood mental health needs. To better serve communities of color, train clinicians in culturally responsive mental health treatment.

Facilitate Access to Mental and Behavioral Health Services: Interventions that leverage home visitation, telehealth, community health workers, or school-based models help to promote access by mitigating barriers connected with social drivers of health.

Adopt Family-Centered Approaches: Parents, caregivers, children, and youth need to inform all phases of program development and implementation. They should have input into the design of clinical spaces to ensure these spaces are welcoming and functional for children and families.

Reduce Silos: Providers can reduce disconnected care by designating people to facilitate collaboration among systems and organizations. Additional care coordinators and social workers could help pediatric practices meet the increased demand for behavioral health-related services. The ability to bill for collaboration is needed to incentivize this type of coordination.

"Behavior is a communication of unmet need... The real issues are beneath the surface."

—Behavioral Health Needs Assessment Advisor

[1] Common Ground Health Multipayor Claims Database
[2] 2023-2024 School Year Monroe County Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report, Monroe County Department of Public Health
[3] NYSDOH Statewide Planning and Research Collaborative (SPARCS), 2023. Analysis by Common Ground Health.

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