

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 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}

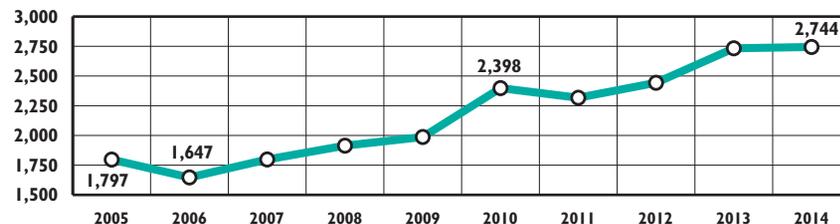
Behavioral health problems affect children of all backgrounds. In Rhode Island, one in five (19.0%) children ages six to 17 has a diagnosable mental health problem; one in ten (9.8%) has significant functional impairment.⁵ Children most at risk for mental disorders are those with prenatal

exposure to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; children born with low birthweight; those suffering abuse and neglect; children exposed to toxic stress; children of parents with a mental health disorder and/or an inherited predisposition to a mental disorder; and children living in poverty.^{6,7} Young people in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems experience mental health problems at higher rates than their peers.⁸

Mental health problems, whether arising from biological, environmental, and/or psycho-social causes, affect the physical functioning of the brain and can be prevented or treated in many cases.^{9,10} An estimated 34% of Rhode Island children who needed mental health treatment or counseling in the past 12 months did not receive it.¹¹

Mental health treatment systems tend to be fragmented and crisis-driven with disproportionate spending on high-end hospital and residential care and often lack adequate investments in prevention and community-based services that would allow children to receive appropriate treatment levels of care in their own communities.^{12,13,14,15,16} Over the past two decades, Rhode Island has worked to build a preventive and treatment system of care that is based in multiple settings including the home, schools, and community, but more progress is still needed.^{17,18,19}

Hospitalizations with Primary Diagnosis of Mental Disorder, Children Under Age 18, Rhode Island, 2005-2014*



Source: RI Hospital Discharge Database (HDD), RI Department of Health, 2005-2014. *Data are for hospitalizations, not number of children. Children may be hospitalized more than once. Mental disorders include ICD-9-CM codes 290-319, including alcohol/drug dependence, psychoses, and anxiety, depressive, mood, and personality disorders. Trend line is based on a new method of analyzing the HDD and is comparable to Factbooks since 2012.

- ◆ In 2014, there were 2,744 hospitalizations of children with a primary diagnosis of mental disorder at Bradley, Butler, Hasbro Children's Hospital, Newport, and Memorial Hospitals, a 53% increase from 2005. Of the Rhode Island children hospitalized in 2014, 74% were ages 13 to 17, 50% had Medicaid/RIte Care coverage and 47% had commercial coverage, and 39% lived in one of the four core cities (where 33% of the child population lives).^{20,21}
- ◆ When a young person needs inpatient behavioral health treatment, but there is no appropriate placement available, they may be "boarded" on medical floors at acute care hospitals or in emergency departments.²² In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, 251 children and youth under age 18 with a psychiatric diagnosis were boarded for an average of less than one day on medical floors at Hasbro Children's Hospital or Rhode Island Hospital, which is a decrease from FFY 2014 when 328 children were boarded for an average of two days. The expanded Medical/Psychiatric Program at Hasbro Children's Hospital provides both inpatient and partial hospitalization care to children with complex mental and medical health conditions who seek treatment through the emergency department or a medical provider.^{23,24}
- ◆ When a child or adolescent is ready to leave the psychiatric hospital and needs a "step-down placement" of lesser clinical intensity, but there is none available due to insufficient capacity or type or there is no other safe placement (including at home), they are referred to as "stuck." Bradley Hospital reported having an average of eight "stuck kids" per day in FFY 2015, up from four "stuck kids" in FFY 2014.²⁵

Psychiatric Hospitals

Children Under Age 19 Treated at Rhode Island Psychiatric Hospitals, October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015 (FFY 2015)

	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	941	15 days	143	38 days	489*	9 days
Residential	43	217 days	30	198 days	--	--
Partial Hospitalization	824	18 days	18	18 days	102	5 visits
Home-Based	0	0	24	23 visits	--	--
Outpatient	1,644	61 visits	86	61 visits	52	NA

Source: Lifespan, 2014-2015 and Butler Hospital, 2014-2015. 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 2015).

The average length of stay is based on discharges. *An additional 51 youth were treated in adult programs.

-- = 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 behavioral health care. The most common diagnoses for young people treated at Butler or Bradley Hospitals in FFY 2015 in an inpatient setting were depressive disorders (48%), bipolar disorders (24%), anxiety disorders (14%), and adjustment disorders (4%).^{26,27}

◆ 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 five Bradley schools and nine community-based classrooms/public school partnerships for children with behavioral health problems and developmental disabilities, which together had an average daily enrollment of 377 students in FFY 2015.²⁸

Children with Medicaid and RItE Care with a Mental Health Diagnosis

◆ In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2015, 22% (26,930) children under age 19 enrolled in Medicaid/RItE Care had a mental health diagnosis, including but not limited to anxiety, alcohol/drug dependence, psychoses as well as depressive, mood, and personality disorders. Of those children with a mental health diagnosis, 29% were ages 6 and under, 34% were ages seven to 12, and 37% were ages 13 to 18.

◆ In SFY 2015, 595 children under age 19 enrolled in Medicaid/RItE Care were hospitalized due a mental health related condition and 1,269 children had a mental health related emergency department visit. Ninety-one percent of those mental health related emergency department visits for children under age 19 in SFY 2015 did not result in a hospitalization.²⁹

Suicide Among Rhode Island Children and Youth

◆ Children and youth with mental health conditions are at increased risk for suicide.³⁰ In 2015, 11% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times during the past year, down from 14% in 2013.³¹ In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014, there were 873 emergency department visits and 442 hospitalizations of youth ages 13-19 due to suicide attempts.³² Twenty-four children and youth under age 20 died due to suicide in Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014.³³

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 2015, 5,837 children under age 18 were treated at CMHOs, and 3,660 children were receiving treatment as of December 31, 2015.³⁴

References

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

^{2,10,30} 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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