

# 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.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

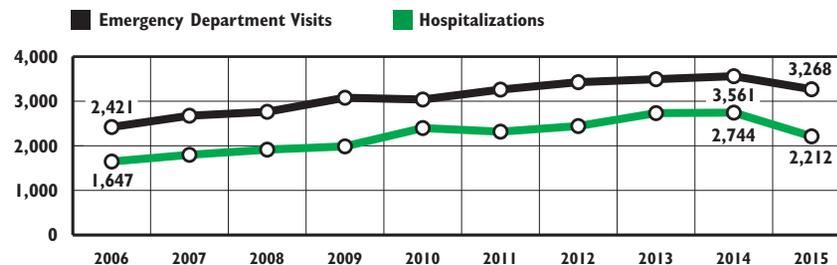
Behavioral health problems affect children of all backgrounds. Nationally, 10% of children under age five experience a significant mental health issue.<sup>5</sup> In Rhode Island, one in five (19.0%) children ages six to 17 has a diagnosable mental health problem; one

in ten (9.8%) has significant functional impairment.<sup>6</sup>

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; those involved with juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and children living in poverty.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

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.<sup>10,11,12</sup> In Rhode Island, an estimated 34% of Rhode Island children who needed mental health treatment or counseling in the past 12 months did not receive it.<sup>13</sup> In Federal Fiscal Year 2016, 212 Rhode Island children and youth (down from 251 children in 2015) were boarded for an average of three days on medical floors at Hasbro Children's Hospital or Rhode Island Hospital awaiting a psychiatric inpatient admission. Also during that time, an average of six children per day were ready to leave the psychiatric hospital (down from the FFY 2015 average of eight kids per day), but were unable due to a lack of step-down availability or there being no other safe placement (including at home).<sup>14,15</sup>

**Emergency Visits and Hospitalizations, for Primary Diagnosis of Mental Disorder, Children Under Age 18, Rhode Island, 2006-2015\***



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database (HDD), 2006-2015. \*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.

◆ In 2015, there were 3,268 emergency department visits and 2,212 hospitalizations of Rhode Island children under age 18 with a primary diagnosis of mental disorder at Bradley, Butler, Hasbro Children's Hospital, Memorial, and Newport Hospitals.<sup>16</sup> While there were declines between 2014 and 2015, emergency department visits have increased 35% and hospitalizations have increased 34% since 2006.<sup>17</sup>

**Type of Care for Primary Diagnosis of Mental Disorder by Select Subgroups, Children Under Age 18, Rhode Island, 2015**

	EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS		HOSPITALIZATIONS	
	#	%	#	%
Female	1,657	51%	1,232	56%
Male	1,611	49%	980	44%
Age 6 and Under	146	4%	61	3%
Age 7-12	803	25%	529	24%
Age 13-17	2,319	71%	1,622	73%
Medicaid/RItE Care	1,957	60%	1,070	48%
Commercial Insurance	1,115	34%	1,097	50%
Black	315	10%	151	7%
White	2,120	65%	1,465	66%
Hispanic*	637	19%	374	17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,268</b>		<b>2,212</b>	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2015. Totals may not sum to 100% due to small categories not being reported. \*Hispanic children can be of any race.

## Psychiatric Hospitals

Children Under Age 19 Treated at Rhode Island Psychiatric Hospitals,  
October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016 (FFY 2016)

	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	960	16 days	121	28 days	486*	8 days
Residential	34	247 days	33	179 days	--	--
Partial Hospitalization	908	18 days	107	18 days	156	5 visits
Home-Based	0	0	17	20 visits	--	--
Outpatient	1,231**	**	**	**	44	NA

Source: Lifespan, 2015-2016 and Butler Hospital, 2015-2016. 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 2016). The average length of stay is based on discharges. \*An additional 57 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 behavioral health care. The most common diagnoses for young people treated at Butler or Bradley Hospitals in FFY 2016 in an inpatient setting were depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, adjustment disorders, bipolar disorders, and schizophrenia.<sup>18,19</sup>

◆ 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 operated six Bradley schools and ten community-based classrooms/public school partnerships for children with behavioral health problems and developmental disabilities, which together had an average daily enrollment of 386 students in FFY 2016.<sup>20</sup>

## Children with Medicaid and Rite Care with a Mental Health Diagnosis

◆ In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016, 22% (24,860) 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, 24% were ages 6 and under, 38% were ages seven to 12, and 38% were ages 13 to 18. In addition, 40% were females and 60% were males.

◆ In SFY 2016, 983 children under age 19 enrolled in Medicaid/Rite Care were hospitalized due a mental health related condition (up from 595 in 2015) and 1,690 children had a mental health related emergency department visit (up from 1,269 in 2015). Ninety-six percent of those mental health-related emergency department visits for children under age 19 in SFY 2016 did not result in a hospitalization.<sup>21</sup>

## Suicide Among Rhode Island Children and Youth

◆ Children and youth with mental health conditions are at increased risk for suicide.<sup>22</sup> In 2015, 10.5% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times during the past year. Rhode Island had the eighth highest suicide attempt rate among ranked states in 2015.<sup>23</sup> In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014 (the most recent year for which data are available), there were 873 emergency department visits and 442 hospitalizations of youth ages 13-19 due to suicide attempts. Twenty-four children under age 20 died due to suicide in Rhode Island between 2010-2014 (most recent data available).<sup>24</sup>

## 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 2016, 5,507 children under age 18 were treated at CMHOs, and 3,769 children were receiving treatment as of December 31, 2016.<sup>25</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>22,23</sup> 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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