

Kids' Mental Health Is a 'National Emergency.' Therapists Are in Short Supply.

September 08, 2022

At the beginning of the year, I started hearing from readers across the country that there were long waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health providers. Many of their kids were really struggling, often with anxiety and depression. When these parents tried to find help, they found there was, in some cases, up to a six-month wait to even get in the door at a therapist's office for an assessment.

This shortage is not just anecdotal, and in some places it existed before the pandemic produced so much suffering that the American Academy of Pediatrics declared child and adolescent mental health a "[national emergency](#)" back in October. Part of the reason for the shortage is that the need for services has increased consistently over time, and the number of child and teen providers has not kept pace.

According to a recent [paper](#) published in JAMA Pediatrics, "Between 2016 and 2020, there were significant increases in children's diagnosed anxiety and depression." In 2019, [Pew Research found](#) that "the total number of teenagers who recently experienced depression increased 59 percent between 2007 and 2017." Then the pandemic came along. According to a meta-analysis across 29 samples including over 80,000 youths across the globe [published in JAMA Pediatrics last summer](#), "youth mental health difficulties" during the pandemic have "likely doubled."

...