

Science Shows How to Protect Kids' Mental Health, but It's Being Ignored

June 02, 2022

Young people in the United States are experiencing a mental health crisis. Warnings from the surgeon general, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the [American Psychological Association](#) and other prominent organizations, as well as regular news reports, highlight the catastrophe, with parents struggling to help their children, and students lined up in school halls to get even a few minutes with counselors, psychologists or social workers who are overwhelmed with young patients seeking services.

Has the current crisis been caused by the pandemic? No. Those of us who have been monitoring the health and well-being of youth know this storm began years ago. In 2022, we continue to fund a system to address children's mental health that is similar to an infrastructure initiated in the 1940s, when returning veterans were the priority for mental health treatment. The system that emerged was—and is—geared to adults.

Scientific advances have identified effective mental health practices, such as school-based emotional regulation training that teaches children how to cope with strong feelings, or school-based screenings that could allow us to detect mental health crises before they occur. Scientific advances have identified effective mental health practices, which have been largely ignored, and now is the time to act on them. Based on centuries-old and long disproven theories of physical and mental health as two independent systems, billions are invested annually on medical research and physician training, but staggeringly few resources are available to advance psychological science or the development of a mental health workforce.

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