

CHARTIS TOP READS

Federal bills highlight growing need to address the youth mental health crisis

Week of August 14 - August 20, 2022

| **AUG 19, 2022**

<https://www.chartis.com/insights/federal-bills-highlight-growing-need-address-youth-mental-health-crisis>

The Buzz

For our nation's youth, the prevalence of mental health conditions was already growing at alarming rates when a generation-changing pandemic further exacerbated the challenge. In March, a [report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reported that 37% of high school students experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, 44% experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, 19% had seriously considered attempting suicide, and 9% had attempted suicide. However, a recently published [survey of pediatric primary care providers](#) found that more than 85% of practices could not access adequate behavioral health support for their patients.

In President Biden's State of the Union Address, treating children's mental health was identified as a major priority, suggesting that there be "full parity between physical and mental healthcare if we treat it that way in our insurance." And in late 2021, Vivek Murthy issued the [Surgeon General's Advisory on Youth Mental Health](#), calling for immediate awareness and action to an urgent and significant public health challenge.

Solving the mental health crisis for America's youth requires simultaneous intervention at many levels. This summer, the U.S. Senate has considered 2 pieces of legislation (the first of which was passed in June), which would improve funding access to support children's behavioral health through 3 primary vehicles:

- The [Safe Communities Act](#), signed into law on June 25, provides nearly \$300 million (FY22) for pipeline development into behavioral health careers and \$1 billion (over the next 5 years) in mental health support for public schools, which includes more dollars for school-based mental health professionals, such as psychologists and counselors.
- The [Investing in Kids Mental Health Now Act](#), a bipartisan bill introduced to the Senate on August 3, proposes increased Medicaid payments for pediatric mental, emotional, and behavioral health services, which includes telehealth access. The bill also directs the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

(CMS) to issue guidance to states on best practices to streamline licensure and credentialing across state lines, and how to expand crisis care capacity quickly when there is an uptick in demand for care.

Why It Matters

The promise of this new legislation is the multiple intended interventions to meet the challenge. As we wait for additional guidance and funding availability, there are several points healthcare leaders can consider now.

- **Creating access to behavioral health outside bricks and mortar:** Digital health solutions can be an important strategy for health systems to enhance access to behavioral health, which lays the groundwork for expanded scope, scale, and efficiency of services.
- **Managing Emergency Department (ED) throughput for behavioral health patients:** In July, a new national behavioral health crisis hotline number 988 was established to provide ready access to a call center staffed by trained personnel. This will increase the already unprecedented demand for behavioral health crisis services. Some leading healthcare organizations are deploying behavioral health innovations in the ED to provide support, training, and tools that enable ED clinicians and staff to improve the care for patients with behavioral health conditions, including reducing time, length of stay, and admission/readmission rates.
- **Expanding the mental health workforce:** There is a serious shortage of behavioral health clinicians across the U.S., with the greatest impact on rural communities, low-income communities, and communities of color. The shortages impact an estimated 132 million Americans, with more than 6,600 mental health practitioners needed to fill vacancies. Working in partnership with the community, healthcare leaders are finding creative ways to build their pipeline to meet the moment.
- **Leveraging Medicaid across different care modalities:** According to a Kaiser Foundation Report, Medicaid plays a key role in covering and financing behavioral healthcare. Ensuring access to services through improved Medicaid reimbursement, including for telemedicine behavioral health visits, will be critical for health systems to address the demand. Other assessment and treatment modalities, such as telemedicine, also reduce familial stress and the resource burden on hospitals.
- **Supporting or partnering with school-based programs:** One in every 6 children aged 6-17 has a behavioral health disorder, and 50% of all behavioral health conditions begin by the age of 14. Early identification and treatment are critical for children to optimally learn and develop. School-based services are an important option for many adolescents who otherwise would not have access to community-based behavioral health services. This includes providers who are school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses who provide a support ranging from screening to provision of services within the school. Health systems can play a variety of roles, including providing technical assistance and training to school staff, children, and parents, as well as provide links to community and health system resources.

Related Links:

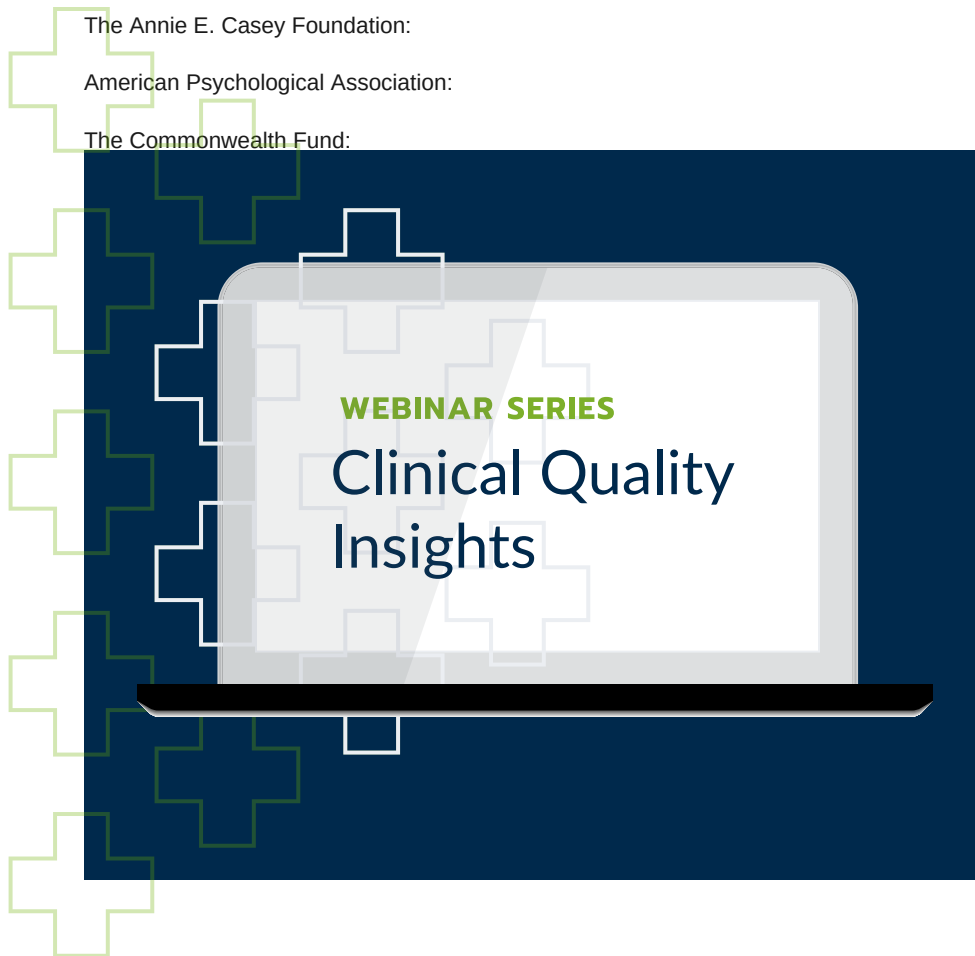
Children's Hospital Association:

The White House Briefing Room:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation:

American Psychological Association:

The Commonwealth Fund:



Webinar

Protecting Suicidal Patients

Suicide Prevention is at the top of The Joint Commission's list of most frequently cited significant issues. It has remained at the top of this list for many years because the requirements are extremely complicated, confusing, and error-prone, with more than 30 frequently asked questions explaining the handful of elements of The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals? related to suicide prevention.

During the webinar, our panelists will break down this web of complexities into understandable and streamlined processes that make sense to clinicians and regulators alike.

Our services

[STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION](#)

[PERFORMANCE TRANSFORMATION](#)

[DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION](#)

[CHARTIS CENTERS FOR AI & STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE](#)

[PAYER TRANSFORMATION](#)

[STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & CHANGE MANAGEMENT](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jennifer Skar

Partner



Mark Wenneker, MD

Partner



Roger Ray, MD

Chief Physician Executive