

Youth Mental Health Data Brief

Mental health issues can have a profound impact on our youth and can hinder their overall ability to learn, socialize, and communicate effectively. The following data sheet provides an overview of the mental health landscape among Tennessee's youth and aims to provide ways that educators can support students dealing with these issues.

Prevalence of Mental Health Conditions

- 1 in 6 youth ages 6–17 experience a mental health disorder each year.¹
- 50% of all mental health disorders begin before the age of 14, and 75% of all mental health disorders manifest before the age of 24.²
- In Tennessee, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth between 10 and 17 years old³
- According to recent Tennessee Kidscount data, 24% of children have at least one or more behavioral health conditions, 38% of high school students reported a feeling of sadness or hopelessness, and 10% of children and teens suffer with anxiety or depression.⁴
- Research indicates that anywhere between 14% to 43% of children and teens will experience at least one traumatic event.⁵

Access to Mental Health Care

- Tennessee is ranked 50th in access to care for youth and more than two-thirds of Tennessee youth with clinical depression go untreated, while only 12% of youth with severe depression received consistent treatment.⁶
- Rural areas of Tennessee face challenges in accessing mental health care services.⁷
- Telehealth services may provide an alternative to in-person care in areas with limited access to mental health care providers.⁸

¹ *Mental health by the numbers*. NAMI. (2022, June). <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

² National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2020). Youth Mental Health First Aid Flier.

³ *Youth suicides are on the rise*. kidcentral tn. (2018). <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/support/crisis-services-for-children/youth-suicides-are-on-the-rise-.html>

⁴ *Kids Count Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation*. (2022). <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data#TN/2/27/32/char/0>

⁵ Sheldon-Dean, H. (2022). *Children's mental health report: Treating symptoms of trauma in children and teenagers*. Child Mind Institute.

⁶ TAMHO. (2019). *All hands on deck: Tennessee's mental health workforce shortage*.

⁷ Barriers to mental health treatment in rural areas – RHIHUB toolkit. (2016). <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/mental-health/1/barriers>

⁸ *Rural Behavioral Health: Telehealth Challenges and Opportunities* [PDF]. (2016). SAMHSA.

Impact on Academic Performance⁹

- Youth with mental health conditions are more likely to experience academic difficulties and dropout of school.
- Children and youth with mental health disorders may miss as many as 18 to 22 days of school.
- The rates of suspension and expulsion of children and youth with mental disorders are three times higher than their peers.
- Only 32 percent of students with a serious mental illness continue onto postsecondary education.

How Educators Can Help

1. Understanding the most common warning signs and symptoms of mental health issues will help to identify students who may be struggling.
2. Reaching out to the school or community counselors when clear symptoms are present helps deliver the proper support and care from the appropriate health care providers.
3. Fostering healthy coping skills and resiliency in the classroom may lead to better emotional responses among students.
4. Providing appropriate classroom peer-systems and programming can teach children appropriate group skills, communication foundations, and coping methods.

Schools can play an essential role in identifying and addressing mental health concerns among youth by collaborating with community mental health care providers to support students with additional needs.

For more information visit Tennessee Department of Education's [Comprehensive School-based Mental Health Supports and Services](#) page:

<https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/health-and-safety/school-based-mental-health-supports.html>

⁹ *How mental health disorders affect youth*. Youth.gov. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health/how-mental-health-disorders-affect-youth>