

# Youth Mental Health Crisis

Children in the United States are struggling and adult inaction is costly. Here is what you need to know about the state of emergency in youth mental health.

## We're headed in the wrong direction.

From 2011 to 2021, the CDC reported across-the-board increases in youth with markers of poor mental health.<sup>1</sup>

The percentage of high school students who reported struggling with persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness **increased to 42%**.

The percentage of high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide **increased to 22%**.

The percentage of female high school students who attempted suicide **increased to 13%**.

## Stigma is still a problem.

Research shows that negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes continue to prevent young people from seeking help.

Youth ages 14-24 report they often feel **shamed, dismissed, and even ridiculed** for their mental health concerns.<sup>2</sup>

**Stigma was identified as a significant barrier** in 92% of studies on factors that keep youth from seeking professional help for their mental health concerns.<sup>3</sup>

College students who reported more perceived public stigma also reported significantly greater odds of having experienced **suicide ideation, planning, and attempt**.<sup>4</sup>

## The consequences are devastating.

Suicide continues to take more young lives than any major disease.

**Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death** for 10-14 year olds and the 3rd leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds.<sup>5,6</sup>

## You can help!

### 1 Educate Yourself

Mental health conditions and abnormal behavior can be difficult to identify in youth.<sup>7</sup> Learning the warning signs is the first step in getting children the help they need.

Find the available mental health resources in your community. Consulting your state health department's website is a great place to start.

### 2 Take Action

Support and engage with community organizations dedicated to creating stable and positive environments for youth. Stronger communities lead to healthier young minds.

Be an advocate for youth mental health. Visit **sophe.org** and take the **Advocacy in Action course** to learn how to contact your policymakers and help petition for positive change.



**If you, or someone you know, is in crisis, contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.**

- ▶ Call or text 988
- ▶ Chat at 988lifeline.org

988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2021. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/yrebs](http://www.cdc.gov/yrebs). Accessed on June 6, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Austin, L. J., Browne, R. K., Carreiro, M., Larson, A. G., Khreizat, I., DeJonckheere, M., & Schwartz, S. E. O. (2024). "It Makes Them Want to Suffer in Silence Rather Than Risk Facing Ridicule": Youth Perspectives on Mental Health Stigma. *Youth & Society*, 0 (0). <https://doi-org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0044118X241237236>

<sup>3</sup> Radez, J., Reardon, T., Creswell, C., et al. Why do children and adolescents (not) seek and access professional help for their mental health problems? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies. *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 30, 183-211 (2021). <https://doi-org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01469-4>

<sup>4</sup> Goodwill, J. R., & Zhou, S. (2020). Association between perceived public stigma and suicidal behaviors among college students of color in the U.S. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 262, 1-7.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 2018-2022 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2024. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2022, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-expanded.html> on Jul 13, 2024 3:26:36 PM

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jensen PS, Goldman E, Offord D, Costello EJ, Friedman R, Huff B, Crowe M, Amsel L, Bennett K, Bird H, Conger R, Fisher P, Hoagwood K, Kessler RC, Roberts R. Overlooked and underserved: "action signs" for identifying children with unmet mental health needs. *Pediatrics*. 2011 Nov;128(5):970-9. doi: 10.1542/peds.2009-0367. Epub 2011 Oct 24. PMID: 22025589; PMCID: PMC3387881.