



## Mental Health in Schools

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### Where We Stand

NAMI believes that public policies and practices should promote greater awareness and early identification of mental health conditions. NAMI supports public policies and laws that enable all schools, public and private, to increase access to appropriate mental health services.



### Why We Care

**One in six** U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, and **half** of all mental health conditions begin by age 14. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behavior problems, anxiety, and depression are the **most commonly** diagnosed mental disorders in children. Yet, **about half** of youth with mental health conditions received any kind of treatment in the past year.

Undiagnosed, untreated or inadequately treated mental illnesses can significantly interfere with a student's ability to learn, grow and develop. Since children spend much of their productive time in educational settings, schools offer a unique opportunity for early identification, prevention, and interventions that serve students where they already are. Youth are almost as likely to receive mental health services in an education setting as they are to receive treatment from a specialty mental health provider — in 2019, **15% of adolescents aged 12-17** reported receiving mental health services at school, compared to 17% who saw a specialty provider.

School-based mental health services are delivered by trained mental health professionals who are employed by schools, such as school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses. By removing barriers such as transportation, scheduling conflicts and stigma, school-based mental health services can help students access needed services during the school-day. Children and youth with more serious mental health needs may require school-linked mental health services that connect youth and families to more intensive resources in the community.

Early identification and effective treatment for children and their families can make a difference in the lives of children with mental health conditions. We must take steps that enable all schools to increase access to appropriate mental health services. Policies should also consider reducing barriers to delivering mental health services in schools including difficulty with reimbursement, scaling effective treatments, and equitable access.

## How We Talk About It

- Many mental health conditions first appear in youth and young adults, with **50%** of all conditions beginning by age 14 and **75%** by age 24.
- **One in six** youth have a mental health condition, like anxiety or depression, but only **half** receive any mental health services.
- Early treatment is effective and can help young people stay in school and on track to achieving their life goals. In fact, the earlier the treatment, the better the outcomes and lower the costs.
- Unfortunately, far too often, there are long delays before they children and youth get the help they need.
- Delays in treatment lead to worsened conditions that are harder — and costlier — to treat.
- For people between the ages of 15-40 years experiencing symptoms of psychosis, there is an average delay of **74 weeks** (nearly 1.5 years) before getting treatment.
- Untreated or inadequately treated mental illness can lead to high rates of school dropout, unemployment, substance use, arrest, incarceration and early death.
- In fact, suicide is the **second** leading cause of death for youth ages 10-34.
- Schools can play an important role in helping children and youth get help early. School staff — and students — can learn to identify the warning signs of an emerging mental health condition and how to connect someone to care.
- Schools also play a vital role in providing or connecting children, youth, and families to services. School-based mental health services bring trained mental health professionals into schools and school-linked mental health services connect youth and families to more intensive resources in the community.
- School-based and school-linked mental health services reduce barriers to youth and families getting needed treatment and supports, especially for communities of color and other underserved communities.
- When we invest in children's mental health to make sure they can get the right care at the right time, we improve the lives of children, youth and families — and our communities.

## What We've Done

- NAMI **letter** of support for the Mental Health Services for Students Act (H.R. 1109), introduced by Reps. Napolitano and Katko
- NAMI **letter** of support for Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019 (S. 1122) introduced by Senator Tina Smith
- NAMI **Ending the Silence** Presentation Program

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Contact Us Main 703-524-7600  
Member Services 888-999-6264  
Helpline 800-950-6264  
4301 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300 Arlington, VA 22203  
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