

## Response to COVID-19

- Emergency response work group
- Multi-region, multi-disciplinary team of volunteers
- Sponsored by KUSM-W Pediatrics
- Free consultation and collaboration with school districts, pediatric specialists, and other community agencies
- Written guidance for school re-opening
- Task force of mental health professionals published guidelines to address early mental health concerns

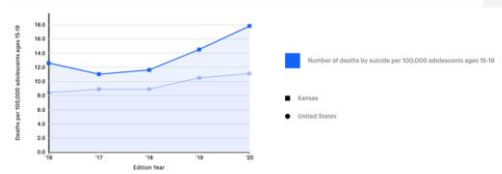
## Mental Health Impact of COVID-19

- Children's mental health emergency visits are up 30% from 2019 in 12-17 year-olds<sup>1</sup>
- Teen suicide is up from 8.4 deaths per 100K in 2016 to 11.1 in 2020<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2020 State of the Student: COVID-19 & Mental Health (n.d.). Chegg.Org. <https://www.chegg.org/covid-19-mental-health-2020>  
<sup>2</sup> America's Health Rankings analysis of CDC WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death, Multiple Cause of Death files, United Health Foundation, America's Health Rankings.org. Accessed 2021.

## Mental Health Impact of COVID-19

Trend: Teen Suicide, Kansas, United States



Source:  
 1. CDC WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death, Multiple Cause of Death files

## Frequent Complaints

- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Life disruption          | • Domestic violence           |
| • Loneliness               | • Online victimization        |
| • Economic impact          | • Loss of family members      |
| • Fear of disease          | • Lack of "milestone" events  |
| • Panic spending           | • Disrupted face-to-face care |
| • Online gambling          | • Delayed developmental care  |
| • Increased alcohol intake | • Skill regression            |
| • Weight gain              | • Academic impact             |

## Mental Health Care

- Improved telehealth access
- Altered (?) threshold for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization
- Residential availability limited due to quarantine
- Learning from SARS (2002-2004)
  - Protracted mental health care needs
  - Multi-agency collaboration
    - Housing
    - Education
    - Employment services
  - Mobilized social support networks

## Mental Health Impact of COVID-19

- What we don't know<sup>1</sup>
  - How many children were depressed/anxious before COVID-19
  - Presence of symptoms may not indicate a clinical diagnosis
- The effect of COVID-19 on mental health workforce
  - Burnout
  - Economic factors
  - Educational factors

<sup>1</sup> Radineet et al., 2020; <sup>2</sup> Zhou et al., 2020; <sup>3</sup> Asari et al., 2020; <sup>4</sup> Freeman, 2020

## Screening for Mental Health Concerns

- Primary care visits are ideal for screening
  - Routine discussion alleviates stigma
  - Opportunity for holistic care
- Have a standard procedure
- Create a plan of action for positive screens
  - In-office intervention
  - Referral to community
  - Acute hospitalization

## Condition-Specific Resources

- Separation Anxiety
  - Mayo Clinic Fact Sheet: [mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/separation-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20077959](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/separation-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20077959)
  - Child Mind Institute Fact Sheet: [childmind.org/guide/separation-anxiety-disorder/](https://childmind.org/guide/separation-anxiety-disorder/)
- Suicide Prevention
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)
  - 1-800-273-8255
  - Crisis Text Line: [www.crisistextline.org/](https://www.crisistextline.org/)
  - Text HOME to 741741
  - Virtual Hope Box: [www.research.va.gov/research\\_in\\_action/Virtual-Hope-Box-smartphone-app-to-prevent-suicide.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/research_in_action/Virtual-Hope-Box-smartphone-app-to-prevent-suicide.cfm)

## Maybe Not All Bad

- Protective factors
  - Understanding and awareness of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>
  - Entertainment, reading, physical exercise<sup>2</sup>
- Building resilience in youth is important<sup>3</sup>
  - Talk honestly with children
  - Problem-solve strategies to feel better
- Mental health literacy may improve
  - Emphasis on mental health in the media
  - Encouragement to check on your friends
  - Normalization of struggles

<sup>1</sup> Zhou et al., 2020; <sup>2</sup> Jiao et al., 2020; <sup>3</sup> Freeman, 2020

## Steps Forward

- Acknowledging & addressing inequity magnification
  - Ensuring access to quality care
  - Targeting underserved populations
  - Providing culturally-sensitive interventions
- Assessing educational gaps
  - Testing in a practical way
  - Using project-based learning to cover broad-based skills

## Caring for Vulnerable Populations

- Children who identify as LGBTQI+
  - Some youth view an extended absence as an opportunity to transition and start fresh
  - May experience bullying as they transition back to in-person schooling in the Fall
    - Promote safe online activities through GLSEN or local agencies (e.g., TheCenterofWichita.org)
    - Facilitate care for emotional, social, and physical needs
    - Ask about well-being and family support
- Encourage safe in-person learning for students with IEPs
  - Emotional and behavioral needs may have been neglected during disruption and may need more intensive attention when school resumes
  - Develop daily routines/habits for kids with ASD
  - Consider naming a point person in each school who maintains regular communication with parents

## Anxiety & Depression

- Separation fears
  - Return to school after being home with parents for several months
  - Risk of family illness and potential loss
  - Fear of personal illness
- Family economic struggles
- Extended grief from personal loss/disappointment
- Reality that school can still be a challenging place to be

## Social Anxiety

- "Social atrophy"
  - Youth became accustomed to virtual meetings
  - Anxiety about in-person social interactions
  - In those with pre-existing social anxiety, symptoms have been much worse
- Encourage those with social anxiety to begin exposure before school starts in August
  - Small, safe group
  - May need to work with a therapist to reduce intense fears of returning to in-person schooling

