



Fort Bend County Behavioral Health Services

May 7th is Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

A day designated to highlight the importance of our children's mental health and well-being.

Addressing the mental health needs of children, youth and families is fundamental to the future of Fort Bend County.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our communities and we must not overlook the psychological impact on our children's mental health.

Some facts about children's mental health

Facts about mental disorders in U.S. children according to CDC:

Mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders begin in early childhood

- 13% – 20 % of children living in the United States (up to 1 out of 5 children) experience a mental disorder in a given year
- Unfortunately, only about 20% of children with mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders receive care from a specialized mental health care provider

ADHD, behavior problems, anxiety, and depression are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in children

Anxiety and depression affect many children

7.1% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 4.4 million) have diagnosed anxiety

- Anxiety may present as fear or worry, but can also make children irritable and angry. Anxiety symptoms can also include trouble sleeping, as well as physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches. Some anxious children keep their worries to themselves and, thus, the symptoms can be missed

3.2% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 1.9 million) have diagnosed depression.

- Depression may present as sadness, hopelessness or anger and irritability. Depression symptoms can include not wanting to do, or enjoy doing, fun things, changes in eating, sleeping patterns, or energy, trouble with concentration, feeling worthless, useless, or guilty, showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior

Millions of US children have been diagnosed with ADHD: The estimated number of children ever diagnosed with ADHD, according to a national 2016 parent survey is 6.1 million (9.4%).

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. CDC estimates that about 1 in 54 children has been identified with ASD

Many family, community, and healthcare factors are related to children's mental health: Among children aged 2-8 years, boys were more likely than girls to have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Among children living below 100% of the federal poverty level, more than 1 in 5 (22%) had a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Age and poverty level affected the likelihood of children receiving treatment for anxiety, depression, or behavior problems.

Childhood Trauma: Information from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

More than **two thirds of children** reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16

Trauma is a *risk factor* for nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders. Traumatic stress can also lead to increased use of health and mental health services and increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Potentially traumatic events include: Psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; community or school violence; domestic violence; national disasters or terrorism; commercial sexual exploitation, sudden or violent loss of a loved one; refugee or war experiences, military family-related stressors (e.g., deployment, parental loss or injury); neglect, and serious accidents or life-threatening illness

Traumatic reactions can include: intense and ongoing emotional upset, depressive symptoms or anxiety, behavioral changes, difficulties with self-regulation, problems relating to others or forming attachments, regression or loss of previously acquired skills, attention and academic difficulties, nightmares, difficulty sleeping and eating, and physical symptoms, such as aches and pains. Older children may use drugs or alcohol, behave in risky ways, or engage in unhealthy sexual activity.

Resiliency - Fortunately, children are also very resilient and we can help children overcome the impact of trauma and other adversities by building resiliencies. These are often know as

protective factors and include such things as: consistent and nurturing caregiver, adaptive coping skills, healthy habits, safe environments, access to healthy foods, positive role models, social supports and connections. Providing children healthy parent-child relationships, safe and stable homes, healthy foods, education, and support systems is key to their emotional and overall wellbeing.

Helpful Links on Children's Mental Health:

Children's Mental Health Basics: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html>

Information for Parents and Caregivers: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/parents-caregivers>

About Child Trauma: <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>

Children's Mental Health Network: <https://www.cmhnetwork.org/>

Center for Developing Child: Harvard University:
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>