

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/blog/sound-the-alarm-for-kids/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Children's emotional and behavioral health was a concern even before the pandemic, but the ongoing public health emergency has made a bad situation worse. Between March and October 2020, the [percentage](#) of emergency department visits for children with mental health emergencies rose by 24% for children ages 5-11 and 31% for children ages 12-17. Similarly, in just the first half of 2021, children's hospitals reported a [45% increase](#) in the cases of self-injury and suicide in children ages 5-17 compared to the same period in 2019.

The pandemic has meant changes in routine, missed doctors visits, increased economic and housing insecurity, and disconnection from support systems for children and families across the country. Many young people, especially Black and Latino children whose communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, have also been affected by the loss of a loved one. We highlighted this devastating loss in [April](#), and the situation has only worsened since then. [The most recent data](#) show that more than 140,000 U.S. children have experienced the death of a primary or secondary caregiver during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hispanic and Black children account for 32% and 26% respectively of all children losing their primary caregiver (despite making up 19% and 13% of the total population). Along with this immense loss and grief, children who have lost a parent or caregiver are at greater risk of economic insecurity, poor academic performance, and long-term mental health consequences.

Despite young people's clear mental health needs, many young people do not have access to the mental health resources they need and deserve. Nationwide, 15 million children and teens are in need of care from mental health professionals, but there are significant shortages across many pediatric mental health professions. [Nearly 1 in 5 students](#) about 8 million children do not have access to a school counselor and nearly 3 million do not even have access to other school support staff such as a school psychologist or social worker.

Congress must act to ensure children and families have access to the supports they need to address this crisis. The Children's Defense Fund joined other leading child advocacy organizations to highlight the ways in which the pandemic and ongoing racial injustice have worsened child and adolescent mental health and to provide the Senate with recommendations to best meet children and adolescents' mental health needs. We have also joined [the Sound the Alarm for Kids Initiative](#) calling on policymakers to address this mental health crisis.

Read the full recommendations [here](#) and learn more about the Sound the Alarm for Kids Initiative at <https://www.soundthealarmforkids.org>.

A gift today helps children get the help they need

The Children's Defense Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our Federal Tax ID number is 52-0895622.

Let us know how you're using this resource



Count me in!

Be a champion for every child. Sign up for updates about our work to fight for children and ways you can help.

- Name*

First Name Last Name

- Email*

- Address*

Zip

-
-

- Hidden
CDF-National Constituent

- Comments

This field is for validation purposes and should be left unchanged.

Fight for children, stay informed and know when to act.