

## POLICY MEMORANDUM

TO: US Department of Health and Human Services  
University of Hawaii at Manoa

FROM: Mary Pascual

SUBJECT: Addressing Concerns About Mental Health Care System In The United States

DATE: November 23, 2016

### **Summary**

Adolescents, 10 to 19 year olds, make up more than 12% of the United States' population ("America's Adolescents"). In the last year, about 3 million of those twelve to seventeen year old adolescents had experienced at least one major depressive episode, and about 6.8 million of thirteen to eighteen year olds have had an anxiety disorder (Schrobsdorf 50). According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, "a major depressive episode is defined as a period of two weeks or longer during which there is either a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, like problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration or self-image" (Schrobsdorf 50). Over the years, the number of adolescents who have experienced a major depressive episode have increased from 7.9% in 2006 to 12.5% in 2015.

### **Background**

In 1963, President Kennedy presented the Community Mental Health Centers Act ("Mental Health Bill Introduced"). In 1979, President Carter presented the Mental Health Systems Act, which was "based on the findings of the President's Commission on Mental Health" and helped the mentally ill by moving them from large state mental hospitals to community-based service ("Mental Health Bill Introduced").