



Children's Mental Health Needs, Disparities, and School-Based Services: A Fact Sheet

References

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The Need

- In 2000, there were 70.4 million children 17 or under in the US (26 percent of the population). 64 percent were white, non-Hispanic; 16 percent Hispanic, 15 percent African-American, 4 percent Asian-Pacific, and 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native.¹
- Of the population ages 9–17, an estimated 21 percent experienced the signs and symptoms of a DSM-IV disorder during the course of a year, 11 percent experienced significant impairment, and 5 percent experienced extreme functional impairment.²
- On average, only one-fourth of children in need of mental health care get the help they need.³
- Use of psychotropic medication for children and youth has increased sharply with more than \$1 billion spent in 1998 for these medications. Stimulants and anti-depressants account for about two-thirds of the bill.³
- Doctors' offices and schools are important settings in which children's mental disorders can be recognized and addressed.²

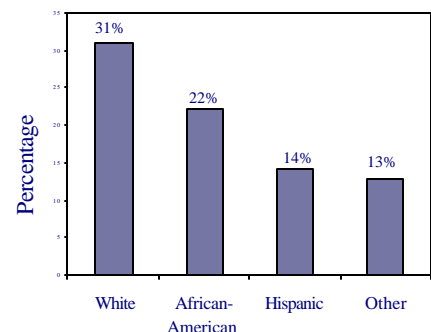
Disparities

- Minorities have less access to mental health services and are less likely to receive needed care.^{3,5}
- Minorities in treatment often receive a poorer quality of mental health care.⁵
- Minorities are underrepresented in mental health research.⁵

The Role of Schools

- Research suggests that schools may function as the de facto mental health system for children and adolescents.⁶
- Only 16 percent of all children receive any mental health services. Of those receiving care, 70–80 percent receive that care in a school setting.^{4,6}
- 83 percent of schools report providing case management for students with behavioral or social problems.⁷
- Nearly half of all schools contract or make other arrangements with a community-based organization to provide mental health or social services to students.⁷
- About 60 percent of the nation's 1500 school-based health centers have mental health professionals on staff. With support from primary care providers, nearly 80 percent of centers provide crisis intervention services.⁸

Children and Youth Receiving Needed Mental Health Service



Source: RAND Health Research Highlights. Calculations are based on data from the National Health Interview Study, 1998.