

New York University Child Study Center



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
CHILD STUDY CENTER

Mental Health Facts

- Ten million children and adolescents suffer from a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. Serious emotional disturbance affects 1 in every 10 young people, but an estimated two-thirds are not getting the help they need
- Only 1 out of every 5 children with a psychiatric disorder gets treatment
- More children suffer from psychiatric illness than from leukemia, diabetes and AIDS combined
- Fewer than 10% of American public schools have comprehensive mental health services
- Over 90% of children and adolescents who commit suicide have a mental disorder before their death¹

Depression

- About 5% of children and adolescents in the general population suffer from depression at any given point in time²
- The rate of depression among adolescents may be as high as 1 in 8³
- NIMH-supported researchers found that among adolescents who develop major depressive disorder, as many as 7% may commit suicide in the young adult years⁴
- Recent studies show that, at any given time, as many as 1 in every 33 children may have clinical depression⁵
- Many parents simply do not recognize the symptoms of depression in their adolescent children. Even parents who have good communication with their children do not necessarily realize it when a child is depressed⁶

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- ADHD is the most common psychiatric condition affecting children; estimates in prevalence in childhood range from 5 to 10%, perhaps as many as 2 million American children⁷
- As many as 50% of children with ADHD are never diagnosed⁸ and therefore never receive treatment
- ADHD is more prevalent in boys than girls, with estimated ratios ranging from 4:1 to 9:1
- Children with ADHD drop out of high school 10 times more than other children
- ADHD appears to run in nearly 40% of families with similar disorders⁹

Learning Disorders

- Five to 20% of all children have learning difficulties—1 in 5 children in every classroom

Anxiety and Mood Disorders

- As many as 1 in 10 young people may have an anxiety disorder¹⁰
- Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental, emotional and behavioral problems to occur during childhood and adolescence. About 13 of every 100 children and adolescents ages 9 to 17 experience some kind of anxiety disorder; girls are affected more than boys¹¹
- Traumatic experiences are not common in the lives of most adolescents. However, approximately 3 million children each year are diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder¹²
- Six months after 9/11/01, 10.5% of New York City 4-12 graders had symptoms of PTSD, approximately 5 times the estimated national rate prior to the attack
- Close to 50% of all adolescents who are clinically depressed also have an anxiety disorder
- One in 100 children is diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder or Schizophrenia
- About 2 in every 100 adolescents experience obsessive-compulsive disorder¹³

Eating Disorders

- Anorexia and Bulimia have the highest death rate (about 5-10%) of any childhood psychiatric illness
- Without treatment, up to 20% of people with serious eating disorders die. With treatment, that number falls to 2-3%¹⁴
- Between 3% and 5% of teenage girls have a diagnosable eating disorder¹⁵
- Although 90% of those diagnosed with anorexia are girls, boys now account for 4-10% of the patients with eating disorders

Children at Risk

- Children are more at risk of violence at home and on the streets than in school
- Eight-four percent of elementary school-age inner-city boys had heard guns being shot, 87% had seen someone arrested and 25% had seen someone get killed
- Every 10 seconds a case of child neglect or abuse is reported in the United States, resulting in 1 million confirmed victims a year. Approximately 879,000 children were found to be victims of child maltreatment in 2000. Almost two-thirds (63%) suffered neglect, 19% were physically abused, 10% were sexually abused and 8% were psychologically maltreated

¹ Shaffer & Craft, 1999.

² American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004.

³ Department of Health and Human Services.

⁴ Weissman MM, Wolk S, Goldstein RB, et al. Depressed adolescents grown up. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1999; 281:1701-13.

⁵ Department of Health and Human Services

⁶ The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter, Vol. 18, No 4, April 2002.

⁷ Clinical Pediatrics.

⁸ Harvard Mental Health Letter

⁹ Clinical Pediatrics

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1999a.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (1999). *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

¹² Memorial health care system, 2001.

¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999a.

¹⁴ National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, 10 year study.

¹⁵ Memorial Health Care Systems, 2001.