Mental health is an area of continuing challenge for children and their families. Suicide is a leading cause of death among adolescents 12–17 years old in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Adolescent suicide death rate has steadily increased in the last decade (National Center for Health Statistics 2016). With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on the youth, some of the deficiencies and lack of capacity in the mental health system have been brought to light. As a result of this, a flood of children and youth with mental health concerns are brought to the emergency departments (ED) for mental health care. As the number of children presenting with stress, anxiety, and depression has skyrocketed throughout the country, the EDs have been overwhelmed and are struggling to adjust and cope with the need for psychiatric services. Many ED providers feel that they have inadequate training and resources to manage this unprecedented demand.

A recent article in the New York Times featuring Dr. Rachel Stanley, Chief of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and the co-lead for the Research Domain of the Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Innovation and Improvement Center, discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed these shortcomings and inadequacies in the mental health care infrastructure. When access to an outpatient system fails to work, the EDs see a lack of preparedness for mental health care, as clinicians struggle to adjust to this surge in demand. EMSC, a federally funded program of the Health Research and Services Administration (HRSA) has developed several programs to help develop education and resources focused on mental health emergencies for a variety of audiences.

Additional Resources:
- HRSA Critical crossroads toolkit @ EMSCImprovement
- EIIC PEAK (Pediatric Education and Advocacy Kit) Mental health toolkit (launch mid-June 2021)
- EIIC Telehealth collaboratives
- EIIC Pediatric Readiness Quality collaborative (PRQC)
- Pediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network (PECARN)
- Targeted Issues Grants
- State Partnership Programs
- State Partnership Regionalization of Care (SPROC)
- National Pediatric Readiness Project (NPRP)
Selected Publications:


- ED Suicide Screening Toolkit for the youth from the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH)- ASQ Youth toolkit

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