



# FACT SHEET

Childhood and adolescent psychiatric and learning disorders are real, common, and treatable. These disorders have significant and lasting costs, both for the individuals affected and for society at large, and deserve our attention. Early and effective, evidence-based treatment can produce profound results and positively impact the lives of our children and our families.

## THE FACTS:

- Half of all lifelong mental illness manifests before age 14.<sup>1</sup>
- As much as 21% of the youth population has a diagnosable psychiatric disorder;<sup>2</sup> applied to recent Census data this indicates close to 15 million young people in the affected population. In addition, millions of children receive accommodations in school for a specific learning disorder (dyslexia, etc.), which means that, in total, more than 15 million children in the United States suffer from a psychiatric or learning disorder.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies estimate that 80% of children with psychiatric or learning disorders never receive treatment. This figure is closer to 66% in the broader population.<sup>4</sup>
- Parents are aware of mental health concerns—in the Child Mind Institute National Children's Mental Health Report Card, 22% reported that they were worried about their children's emotions or behavior. But they are also slow to act: 43% said they waited a year or more after these worries to see an expert, and 22% waited two years.<sup>5</sup>
- Anxiety disorders occur in up to 13% of children and adolescents.<sup>6</sup> Untreated anxiety has been correlated with teen depression and functional impairment.
- Depression and bipolar disorder occur in 6.2% of young people.<sup>7</sup> 5,000 adolescents commit suicide every year, the third leading cause of death in this age range, and 90% of suicides have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder.
- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder affects up to 10% of school-age children; untreated, ADHD has been tied to prison, school dropout, tens of billions of dollars in lost productivity, and anxiety and depression.<sup>8</sup>

- Eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia nervosa affect 3% of the population, with the vast majority being female.<sup>9</sup> Eating disorders are difficult but not impossible to treat, which is paramount; these are among the most fatal, if not the most fatal of all psychiatric disorders.<sup>10</sup> Up to 20% of people with anorexia will die from the disorder.
- Autism is a developmental disorder affecting communication and social learning now diagnosed in approximately 1 out of 100 children, a rate that is increasingly steadily.<sup>11</sup> With early and intensive behavioral intervention, children have been known to move off the spectrum.
- Early intervention is key to preventing relatively minor disorders from becoming more disabling, but stigma and reticence of parents and caregivers due to lack of reliable information delays the onset of effective, timely treatment.<sup>12</sup>
- The difficulty of reimbursement, scarcity of educational programs, and lack of funding means the number of professionals available to treat kids is vanishingly small.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, there are only 7,500 child psychiatrists and 3,500 child psychologists for 15 million children with psychiatric and learning disorders.
- One estimate of the annual cost of lost earnings and treatment attributable to severe mental illness is more than \$300 billion. This does not include the costs of incarceration, homelessness, comorbid physical ailments, and early death that almost inevitably stem from untreated psychiatric disorders.<sup>14</sup>

---

1. Kessler et al, "Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of 12-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication." Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2005.

2. MECA, Shaffer et al, 1996.

3. US Department of Education, 24th Annual Report, 2002.

4. Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, 1999.

5. Child Mind Institute National Children's Mental Health Report Card, 2011.

6. Shaffer et al, 1996.

7. Ibid.

8. Centers for Disease Control.

9. Ibid.

10. Herzog et al, 2000.

11. Centers for Disease Control.

12. Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, 1999.

13. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

14. Insel, 2008.



The **Child Mind Institute** is dedicated to transforming mental health care for children everywhere. Founded by Dr. Harold S. Koplewicz and Brooke Garber Neidich, our organization is committed to finding more effective treatments for childhood psychiatric and learning disorders, building the science of healthy brain development, and empowering children and their families to get help, hope, and answers.