## Mental Health Resources for Pediatric Patients

# Mental Health Resources for Pediatric Patients

Deepinder Singh
Colchester Family Medicine
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Mentor: Dr. Christine Staats

# Problem identification, the need, AHEC areas of focus

- The prevalence of and costs of supporting mental health concerns in children have been increasing since even before the COVID-19 pandemic[1,2].
- Children may not receive needed care for a variety of reasons[3,4] including, but not limited to:
  - Limited mental health knowledge or knowledge of resources
  - Limited availability of resources
  - Logistical barriers such as time for appointments, transportation concerns, etc.
- AHEC areas of focus: behavioral health integration and current, emerging health issues, social determinants of health

# Public health cost

- The cost of healthcare is increased for families whose children have mental health concerns, with one study reporting $2337 more in spending for those households[2] and another study reporting on average $5000 more in medical spending among households whose children have mental health concerns[5].
- In Vermont, there are a variety of barriers and concerns in providing mental healthcare to children. Largely, this may be because working supporting pediatric mental health means working with the entire caregiver unit (families, schools, PCP, specialists, etc.)

# Community perspectives

- Kelsey Conroy, LICSW:
  - "One of the biggest challenges in supporting pediatric mental health is finding the time to support kids at school and getting parents on board with children needing mental health support can be a challenge."
  - "VT has some clear policies about children accessing mental health care on their own, but there is still an insurance piece and with parents needing to be involved."
- Amy Woodruff, LCMHC, LADC:
  - "One of the biggest challenges is length of wait time for the limited services available. This is a theme not just in VT, but NY too."
  - "You're working with the entire caregiver unit…it's not just PCPs who make referrals now. When I work a case, I look at the family too. The patient for billing purposes is the youth, but everyone is involved."

# Intervention and methodology

- A SmartPhrase was created in EPIC to provide parents with information about how to support their child's mental health.
- This can be included in after-visit summaries or printed out.
- The SmartPhrase was shared to physicians and staff at Colchester Family Practice and can be shared further for use at other practices. The information is not specific to the practice or just Chittenden County.

# Results

- With feedback from providers and social workers at the practice, the SmartPhrase was built to contain the following information:
  - How to find a counselor/therapist
  - What the letters (LMHC, LICSW, Psy.D, etc.) mean
  - Community resources (crisis info and other info in and outside of Chittenden County)
  - Ways to support wellbeing/brain health at home

# Evaluation and limitations

- Given the timeline of this project, evaluation of the SmartPhrase's utility is limited.
- Patients and families can be asked for their thoughts about the information provided at the visit.
- In a more rigorous study, data on how many patients were provided the information and how many eventually sought a counselor/therapist or utilized other resources provided can be collected to assess effectiveness.

# Recommendations for the future

- This SmartPhrase is available to edit and can be modified.
- More focused versions can be created with specific instructions on how to filter results when searching for a counselor/therapist at each of the sources provided.
- As many patients and families may not use MyChart, a QR code version of the document can be shared for individuals to access the form from any smartphone or other device.

# References


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3. Radez, J., Reardon, T., Creswell, C., Lawrence, P. J., Evdoka-Burton, G., & Waite, P. (2021). Why Do Children and Adolescents (not) Seek and Access Professional Help for Their Mental Health problems? a Systematic Review of Quantitative and Qualitative Studies. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 30(2), 183–211. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01469-4
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5. Tkacz, J., & Brady, B. L. (2021). Increasing rate of diagnosed childhood mental illness in the United States: Incidence, prevalence and costs. Public Health in Practice, 2, 100204. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhip.2021.100204

# SmartPhrase:

.PEDSMHGUIDE

**Finding the right mental health support for your child can be difficult.**

**Below, you will find a summary of different supports as well as links to specific resources tailored to your child's needs.**

**Where to find a counselor/therapist:**

- Your PCP office
  - Your PCP office may have an integrated child psychiatrist or counselor to provide a variety of supports and services.
- The following online search tools allow you to find a therapist by filtering based on age, gender, location, areas of expertise, and more.
  - Vermont Counseling Network
  - Riverstone Counseling at Spectrum Youth and Family Services
  - Psychology Today
  - Monarch

**What do all the letters mean?**

All of the following individuals often work in close contact with a primary care doctor or psychiatrist. There may not be a "right" person to see. When you reach out, some helpful questions to ask them include what they treat or have expertise in, what insurance they accept, and whether they do in-person/virtual/hybrid sessions.

- LMHC/LCMHC – Licensed mental health counselor or licensed clinical mental health counselor
  - This individual is specifically trained in mental health work and can provide counseling but can't prescribe medication.
- LCSW/LICSW – Licensed clinical or licensed independent clinical social worker
  - This individual is specifically trained in mental health work and can provide counseling and other services like connecting with supports for other family needs but can't prescribe medication.
- Psy.D/PhD – Doctorate in psychology
  - This individual is trained in the science of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. They can diagnose mental health concerns and provide counseling. Some individuals may be licensed to prescribe medication.

**Community Resources:**

- Crisis support:
  - Suicide and crisis lifeline: call 988
  - First Call for Chittenden County: call 802-488-7777
    - Phone support, crisis intervention and assessment, referral, follow-up care
  - Mental health crisis lines for various VT counties can be found on the Department of Mental Health website
- Essential community services line: call 211 for help with finding mental health resources in VT
- For more resources, refer to the Vermont Center for Children, Youth and Families Community Resource Guide

**Supporting Well-being at Home**

- Ways to improve your brain health
- 10 ways to improve mood naturally