

Dept. of Health Services: Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health releases information and steps to improve girls' mental health

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 15, 2023

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Girls and young women in Wisconsin are reporting troubling rates of poor mental health. The sobering state of girls' mental health is not unique to Wisconsin – nationally, nearly 60% of teen girls report depression, a dramatic increase from ten years ago. Anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, and depression can be worse for girls of color who often live in under-resourced communities, compounding their burdens.

Researchers found a number of stressors are driving this decline in mental health: academic demands, early puberty, early sexualization, body image, bullying, discrimination, as well as societal stressors such as gun violence, climate change, and political divisiveness.

“Fortunately, there are a number of strategies to increase girls' protective factors and reduce the broader social risk factors,” said Linda Hall, director of the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH).

Teaching wellness strategies that foster healthy coping skills and positive friendships can help youth manage stress and nurture resilience.

“Surrounding Wisconsin children with evidence-based wellness strategies – in their homes and in their schools – is one of the best pathways to preventing further mental health declines. With the vast majority of teen girls reporting poor mental health, the time to act is now,” said Director Hall.

Further strategies are highlighted in the new OCMH fact sheet on girls' mental health released today, including:

- Youth can work with peers to advocate for wellness in their schools, building positive relationships and strengthening school belonging along the way.
- Youth can cultivate a positive online experience by curating their social media feeds for uplifting content, and by reducing nighttime screen use.
- Caregivers can be attuned to the warning signs of poor mental health, and the wellness factors that protect girls' mental health.
- Schools can screen students for concerns, and teach digital literacy, bullying prevention, and mental health literacy, embedding these as routine parts of the school culture.
- Policymakers can increase stable funding for peer support services and mental health services in schools.
- Policymakers can support mental health literacy and suicide prevention requirements in schools.

See the [complete fact sheet](#).

See [previous fact sheets](#).