

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Children's Mental Health Is In Crisis**

The U.S. surgeon general has recently called the decline in youth mental health across the country as an urgent public health crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the rates of suicide, self harm, anxiety and depression are up among adolescents – a trend that began before the pandemic and hospital admissions data shows the number of teenage girls who have been suicidal has increased 50% nationwide since 2019.

As the United States approaches 2 full years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Psychological Association (APA) maintains mental illness and the demand for psychological services are at all-time highs—especially among children. While some children benefited from changes like remote learning, others are facing a mental health crisis. Prior to COVID-19, CDC data found 1 in 5 children had a mental disorder, but only about 20% of those children received care from a mental health provider. Whether kids are facing trauma because of child abuse or loss of a family member or everyday anxiety about the virus and unpredictable routines, they need even more support now—all amid a more significant shortage of children's mental health resources.

The APA recommends bringing mental health into the classroom. The American Rescue Plan Act, passed in March 2021, included \$170 billion for school funding, and many schools used the funding to hire mental health workers, including psychologists. Other federal and state funding is being allocated toward training more psychologists. Many schools are hiring mental health providers on a short-term basis, as well as taking a preventative approach focused on training teachers in psychological principles. Psychologists in some districts are training teachers in basic social and emotional skills to help students cope with stress and anxiety in real time. Equipping kids with coping skills in the classroom can prevent strain on school psychologists while also improving students' ability to learn.

Additionally, some teachers are incorporating formal mental health lessons into their curriculum with help from psychologists to help incorporate pandemic-relevant topics like anxiety, trauma, and warning signs of suicide into their classes. Other schools are investing in social and emotional health training programs for staff, such as Yale University's RULER program, which teaches school leaders and teachers how to equip students with emotional intelligence skills.

The APA further encourages training teachers to address trauma. Along with more minor mental and behavioral health concerns, teachers are facing an unprecedented number of students with trauma. Mental Health Primers, developed by the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education can also provide information for teachers to identify behaviors in the classroom that are symptomatic of mental health and other psychological issues, with the goal of directing teachers to appropriate resources for their students.

While short-term crisis funding has helped many communities and schools hire mental health professionals and develop related programs, psychologists and policymakers continue to advocate for more permanent solutions. In a September 2021 address to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, encouraged Congress to consider long-term investments in states' and school systems' mental health workforces and infrastructures. In October 2021, the Biden administration and U.S. Department of Education released new guidance for schools to better help students' mental health needs. Several bills could help protect kids' mental health in the long term. President Biden proposed an additional billion dollars to procure health care professionals—including mental health professionals—in schools. As of November 2021, the bill has passed in the House and will soon go before the Senate.

Also as of November 2021, bipartisan lawmakers are working to pass the Student Mental Health Helpline Act, which would create a grant program to support existing and promote new statewide student mental health and safety helplines. The Comprehensive Mental Health in Schools Pilot Program Act, a bill referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor in May 2021, would provide resources for low-income schools to integrate social and emotional learning and evidence-based, trauma-informed practices into all aspects of the school environment.

The American Psychological Association is the largest scientific and professional organization of psychologists in the United States, with over 133,000 members, including scientists, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. For more information please visit [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org).

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in the City of Glen Cove. It's Coalition members provide evidence-based Life Skills Training to youth and adults to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors that lead to addiction. To learn more about SAFE and its programs and services or to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use in please visit [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org). To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition).