



## Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative

# MONTHLY PROGRESS

July 2022

## OVERVIEW

Announced by Governor JB Pritzker in March 2022, the Initiative aims to improve the delivery of behavioral health services to children and adolescents with significant and complex challenges, as well as to streamline and simplify the ways in which families can access resources, services, and supports for the youth in their care. This work, which will culminate in a Blueprint for Transformation that will guide the state in improving the children's behavioral health service system in Illinois, is led by Dr. Dana Weiner, a clinical psychologist and child welfare expert with decades of experience in improving the functioning of public systems and increasing access to services for children and families.



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the first months of the Initiative we have learned a great deal about the substantial challenges facing children in crisis. The Governor's office has dedicated substantial resources to addressing these challenges, and partners across the state have stepped forward to offer solutions and perspectives on how we might transform our system. Among these promising approaches include improving the consistency of services across state agencies, raising awareness among parents and families of resources available for mental health and trauma-related services, and building on the foundation of promising programs that have been successful in stabilizing and serving children. In partnership with six Illinois Departments (Public Health, Human Services, Healthcare and Family Services, Children and Family Services, Juvenile Justice, and the State Board of Education), we have developed preliminary technological and operational solutions that can be brought to scale to provide improved access to resources across the state.

## DID YOU KNOW

- 1 In the first three months of the Initiative, the team engaged more than 160 providers, advocates, partners, judges, system leaders, and stakeholders to share perspectives on the children's mental health crisis.
- 2 The Illinois Department of Public Health Office of Women's Health and Family Services quantifies and ranks adolescent health across Illinois' counties [Illinois Adolescent Health County Rankings](#)
- 3 The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership's 2022 Plan [Children's Mental Health Plan - Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership \(icmhp.org\)](#) was informed by the perspectives of over 600 community members across the state.
- 4 According to the CDC, between March and October of 2020 mental health-related ER visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits (Leeb, R. T., et al., Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 69, No. 45, 2020).
- 5 The top 5 mental health concerns leading to emergency room visits for young people in Illinois between 2019 - 2021 were: (1) depression (2) anxiety (3) alcohol-related disorders (4) psychosis and (5) disruptive behaviors (Illinois Department of Public Health, 2022)



## COORDINATION

The Interagency Crisis Staffing Workgroup, comprised of representatives from the six partner agencies, meets several times a week to address the urgent and emerging needs of young people who need residential placements. By partnering with each other and providers across the state, the group has become skilled at recognizing opportunities to leverage the strengths of sister agencies to identify services and supports and overcoming barriers to connecting families. Outreach on individual cases has included regular communication with legislators, local hospitals, local school districts, county detention centers and communities, promoting collaborative engagement that recognizes and meets the needs of families.

## BEST PRACTICES

The team is in the process of a detailed review of best practice approaches in use in Illinois and across the country for supporting families, averting behavioral health crises, and delivering services to youth. Drawing on relationships with system leaders and program innovators, our team is exploring the implementation challenges and lessons learned in places where these approaches have been tested. Ultimately, this information will be used to assemble recommendations that will be responsive to the needs of Illinois youth.

## PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

To facilitate the work of the inter-agency crisis staffing team, the Initiative is piloting an online portal that will speed connections between families and partner agencies and heighten awareness of resources among legislators, hospital social workers, and other key individuals who become aware of crisis cases needing attention. The tool will be used to connect families who need rapid responses to secure inter-agency resources to a “lead agency” who can make the necessary linkages. This strategy will serve as the foundation for a future system that is more robust.

## COMING SOON

- Data analysis to understand needed capacity for community-based and residential services.
- Subject matter expert interviews to gather diverse perspectives on challenges and solutions.
- Focus groups and forum with parents, former youth, and communities to understand family experience of seeking and obtaining mental health care.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about the **Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative** please contact [Dana.A.Weiner@Illinois.gov](mailto:Dana.A.Weiner@Illinois.gov)