

HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Mental Health Services

DEFINITION

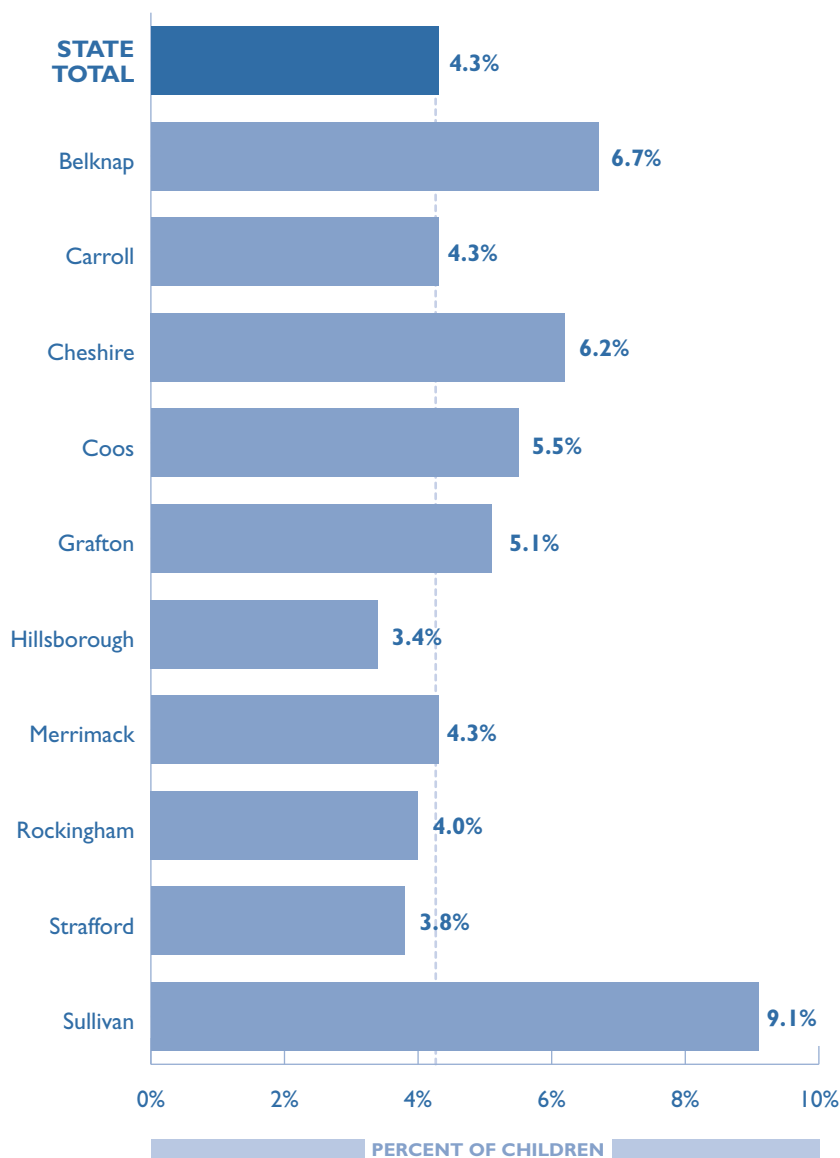
This indicator reports the percentage of New Hampshire children ages zero to 17 receiving mental health services at one of 10 state-supported regional community mental health centers in 2009. This does not include children who receive mental health services at the State Hospital, private hospitals, group homes or private practices.

CONTEXT

Nationally 20 percent of children ages 0 to 18 live with a diagnosable mental illness. Severe mental illness affects roughly 10 percent of U.S. youth ages nine to 17. Children who suffer from mental illness are more likely to miss school, be suspended or expelled from school, perform poorly and drop out of high school. They are more likely to get in trouble with the law and mentally ill children in the child welfare system are more likely to move from home to home (Stagman and Cooper 2010). Nationally and in New Hampshire, poverty and involvement with the child welfare system are primary risk factors for childhood mental illness (Stagman and Cooper 2010).

Estimates suggest less than one quarter of U.S. children with mental health problems receive treatment (Stagman and Cooper 2010). Barriers such as lack of education, availability of care, cost of care and social stigmas prevent families from accessing mental health services for their children (Abelman et. al. 2009). Nationally, children with private insurance and uninsured children are less likely to receive services than children with public insurance. Minority children are less likely to receive treatment and boys are more likely to receive treatment than girls. The likelihood of being diagnosed varies by age: children under 6 are least likely to have a mental health diagnosis and teenagers are most likely to be diagnosed and receive services (Tappin and Norton 2007).

Children Receiving Community Mental Health Services
By County, 2009



NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

New Hampshire lacks a comprehensive data source on children's mental health. Recent studies of mental health in New Hampshire have applied national estimates to the state population to approximate the scope of mental health problems here, employed medical claims data to document service utilization, and provided estimates based on a range of surveys.

Using national estimates, a 2007 New Hampshire study calculates that approximately 56,000 Granite State children have mental illness, with 10,000 suffering from Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). The most common mental health problem for all age groups was depressive disorder which affects an estimated 25 percent of New Hampshire youth, while an estimated 14 percent have had suicidal thoughts and 13 percent suffered from an anxiety disorder (Tappin and Norton 2007).

In 2009, ten regional community mental health centers in New Hampshire provided mental health services to 12,844 children ages zero to 17. Over the period from 2002 to 2009, the number of children accessing mental health services at community health centers increased 25 percent, growing every year except for a small decrease from 2005 to 2006 (DHHS 2010 and Kids Count 2007). A recent study of the mental health of New Hampshire children under age 6 found that while mental health services are crucial in the early years of childhood, available services in New Hampshire are sparse and inadequate (Abelman et.al. 2009)

The state's most populous counties, Hillsborough, Rockingham, Merrimack and Strafford, have the highest numbers of children receiving mental health services at community mental health centers. However, as a percentage of the child population these counties have a smaller share of children receiving services (3 to 4 percent) than the rest of the state. Sullivan County has the highest percentage of children receiving mental health service at community mental health centers — 9.1 percent of the county's child population. (see chart on previous page)

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. 2010. Division of Community Based Care Services Bureau of Behavioral Health.

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