



FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act of 2022, S. 4747

U.S. Senators Bob Casey and Rob Portman

Mental health services for youth have failed to meet rising demand – putting children's lives at risk

While the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges for many kids, pediatric mental health disorders have long been [rising at alarming rates](#), affecting as many as [one in five children](#). In 2019, [a third](#) of high school students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness, an [increase of 40% from 2009](#).

Reimbursement rates for Medicaid providers have not kept pace with the surging demand for mental health support, and we have yet to realize the system-wide changes needed to make mental health care accessible to every kid who needs it. The high level of unmet need has led children's health care organizations to declare a [national emergency](#) in child and adolescent mental health.

Medicaid matters for youth mental health

Timely mental health care can save a child or teen's life – and Medicaid is a powerful tool to improve kids' access to mental health services. Medicaid is the [single largest payer](#) of mental health services for kids. Over [4 million](#) children enrolled in Medicaid have a diagnosed behavioral health condition, and many more are likely to be [going without](#) needed support. Further, about [half](#) of youth under 21 who qualify for Medicaid due to a disability have a behavioral health diagnosis. Investment in Medicaid and changes to service delivery under the program are key to strengthening mental health care for youth.

The Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act

The Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act would improve children's mental health care through—

- Increased Medicaid payments for pediatric mental, emotional, and behavioral health services.
- Guidance to states on the provision of pediatric mental health services under Medicaid, including through telehealth. This includes a description of best practices for the use of audio-only telehealth, expanding the originating site requirement, and streamlining the licensure and credentialing process for telehealth across state lines.
- Guidance to states on flexibilities to expand crisis care capacity, so that facilities with a limited number of beds can quickly respond to an uptick in demand for care.