Youth Mental Health and Wellness

Creating a comprehensive support system

If you have concerns about a child's or teen's mental health, it can be daunting to figure out how, where, and when to access support. Understanding the child's condition, navigating various levels of care, and finding the right resources can take time.

A child's best mental health outcome depends not on one provider but on a **cohesive system of care** with many touch points, resources and compassionate representatives throughout the community. There are many avenues available for support — from community partnerships, school resources, wellness centers, informative research and clinical care. Stanford Children's Health is committed to being a key partner in the development and coordination of the continuum of mental health support for our entire community. Faculty physicians and other members of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry team at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford play an active role in multiple clinical, academic, community and other collaborations. Here we share information about our approach as well as **resources available in the community**.

Resources in Peninsula and South Bay schools

Stanford Children's Health partners with many local schools to provide consultation to school staff and offer direct clinical services to students when necessary.

On-campus Wellness Centers at these locations give students and parents a place where they can connect with their guidance counselor or where students can drop in during school hours to find immediate support or referral to appropriate care. Currently, we partner with the following schools:

- Palo Alto Unified School District
- East Palo Alto Academy
- Mountain View – Los Altos High School District
- San Mateo Union High School District
- Los Altos School District
- AchieveKids School
- Sacred Heart Schools (Atherton)
- St. Ignatius College Preparatory (San Francisco)

Resources in the community

- **Sources of Strength** is a national suicide prevention program that provides peer-to-peer support between students and mentoring adults in local schools. "Peer leaders are taught how to offer support and share how they got through tough times," says Shashank Joshi, MD, director of School Mental Health Services for Stanford's Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. "They do this not only by sharing with friends but also through connecting with trusted adults." sourcesofstrength.org

- **Project Safety Net** provides a hub of information, resources and education for anyone in the Bay Area who needs mental health support. Representatives from Stanford Children's Health participate in Project Safety Net's leadership and other advisory committees. psnpaloalto.com

- **The Health Alliance and Response to Adolescent Depression (HEARD)** is supported by a Stanford grant to create a community alliance of health care and mental health professionals who provide resources such as a searchable directory of mental health care providers in the Peninsula area, a prevention toolkit, and list of local community resources. Stanford child psychiatrists serve on HEARD's executive leadership team. heardalliance.org

- **The Stanford Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing**, established in 2015, includes early mental health support and clinical care, educational and community partnerships, and a mental health technology program. This center focuses on mental health issues in the area and spearheads events like the popular Mental Health Innovation Challenge to tackle issues around key mental health questions. med.stanford.edu/psychiatry/special-initiatives/youthwellbeing

- Child psychiatry research programs also provide a point of access for mental health care. To participate in researched-based care, please sign up for Stanford's **Brain and Behavior Research Registry**. med.stanford.edu/childpsychiatry/BrainandBehaviorRegistry

When to see a doctor

Always start with your child's **pediatrician** to inquire about support for your child's mental health. Some pediatricians are able to diagnose and, in some cases, even treat a range of mental health conditions. They can also refer patients to a specialist for evaluation and care, which can help ensure criteria for insurance coverage are met.

Once a diagnosis is provided, a treatment plan will be developed that is tailored to the unique needs of the child and their family.

Mental health diagnosis and treatment for children and adolescents is also available through a variety of **clinics and care centers** throughout the Bay Area, including:

- Children's Health Council: chconline.org
- Sutter Health: sutterhealth.org
- Bay Area Children's Association: www.baca.rocks
- El Camino ASPIRE program: elcaminohospital.org/services/mental-health/specialty-programs/aspire

Many county and community agencies accept Medi-Cal. Patients who don't have insurance can seek free health clinic locations throughout the Bay Area. Additional resources are listed on the HEARD website.

Types of treatment programs for mental health issues

Based on a diagnosis, treatment plans range from:

- individual therapy
- group therapy
- intensive outpatient programs (IOP)
- partial inpatient programs
- inpatient care programs

Some programs include two or more of these options and may or may not include medication.

What to do in an emergency

For urgent or life-threatening mental health needs, please call 911 or visit our pediatric emergency department. For immediate crisis intervention, text 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line, or dial the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

If a young person's mental health condition is life-threatening, the pediatric psychiatry team in our Stanford Health Care/Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford Emergency Department immediately evaluates and triages the young person to the appropriate care. After evaluation, teens with suicidal ideation or self-injurious behaviors can be seen by the team, who will provide psychoeducation and refer patients to an appropriate outpatient psychiatric team if they do not already have one.

Adolescent psychiatric inpatient unit

Stanford Children's Health began a partnership with Mills-Peninsula Medical Center in 2017 that includes management of up to eight-beds in their adolescent psychiatric inpatient unit. Even as those beds are available to youth with urgent or life-threatening mental health needs, the child psychiatry team at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford is determined to reduce the likelihood that a young person will ever need an inpatient bed.

"Hospitalization should be the last resort," explains Antonio Hardan, MD, chief of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine. "Every child should have multiple layers of intervention before hospitalization."

Our approach

Through research, clinical care, education and community partnerships, and public policy and advocacy, our focus is on providing a **continuum of care** — a comprehensive system of care that spans from supporting children in their efforts to maintain wellness to addressing low-risk concerns all the way to providing high-risk interventions.

We have led the community in shifting away from a "disease" model of mental health care in which adults and caregivers react once a child is already suffering toward a **"wellness" model** that focuses on supporting young people before they get sick and working to prevent suffering. That's why we believe care needs to begin where children live, learn and play, extending to the most advanced care settings as necessary.

For example, Stanford Children's Health has helped to bring **yoga and mindfulness** to 3,500 K–8 students in East Palo Alto's Ravenswood City School District through a major research project in partnership with Pure Edge, Inc. The focus of the program is two-fold: to help reduce kids' stress and research mental health. In addition to improving students' physical fitness and ability to cope with stress, the program also asks students to participate in brain scans, sleep analyses and other data collection to scientifically validate the effectiveness of this approach.

Multiple participants and providers, close partnerships, and resources throughout the community work together to encircle children and meet them where they are, promote wellness, and provide the right support at the right time.

Advocacy, policy and clinical research

As an academic medical center and care network, one of Stanford Children's Health's primary roles is to lead the effort to improve mental health care through **research and advancement of the understanding of mental health**. In addition to local support, Stanford Children's Health actively participates in statewide efforts to address systemic influences on children's mental health in California.
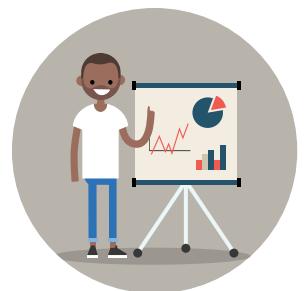
- Victor Carrion, MD, director of the Early Life Stress Program and vice chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Stanford, is the former chair of the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission. In 2016, the group lobbied the California legislature to devote more resources to public mental health programs for youth. The legislature responded with $30 million as part of **Senate Bill 833**, which authorizes the California Health Facilities Financing Authority Act to adopt emergency regulations to provide grant awards that can be used to expand local resources for an array of crisis services for children and youth 21 years of age and under in the following areas: crisis intervention, crisis stabilization, crisis residential treatment, mobile crisis support teams and family respite care.

- Stanford Children's Health helped write and pass AB 2246, the **Student Suicide Prevention Bill**, which requires all school districts in California to adopt suicide prevention and wellness promotion policies for students in grades 7 through 12. Currently, our child psychiatry division oversees a contract with Santa Clara County to train schools in implementing these requirements.