

How Much Mental Health Care Are Kids Getting, and How Much Does It Cost?

On average, 5% to 7% of all young people receive mental health care each year.

- Adolescents (ages 12–17) are the biggest users of these services.

Hispanic children are less likely than white or African American children to receive mental health care.

- About 4% of Hispanic children receive care, compared with
- About 5% of African American children and
- About 6% of white children.

The estimated annual cost of treating troubled youth is \$12 billion.

- Privately insured youth account for nearly half of total mental health expenditures.
- Medicaid recipients generate only about a quarter of the costs.

The nature of mental health care for young people has changed considerably.

- Sixty percent of care is now given on an outpatient basis, much of it from school-based programs.
- Use of psychotropic medication has grown dramatically.
- More than \$1 billion was spent in 1998 on psychotropic medication to treat, on average, 4% of all youth, predominantly ages 6–17.
- Stimulants and antidepressants accounted for nearly three-fourths of the bill.

References are listed on the reverse side of this page.

This fact sheet is based on the following publications:

Ringel JS, Sturm R. "National Estimates of Mental Health Utilization and Expenditures for Children in 1998." *Journal of Behavioral Health Services Research*. 2001;28(3):319-333.

Stein B, Sturm R, Kapur K, Ringel JS. "Psychotropic Medication Costs Among Youth with Private Insurance." *Psychiatric Services*. 2001;52(2):152.