Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Policy Review: Addressing System Needs for Child Behavioral Health in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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While youth seem to be at relatively limited physical health risk from COVID-19, the broad societal impacts of this pandemic, and the isolation caused by its associated shelter-in-place activities, have created a crisis for child and adolescent mental health. This crisis adds to an already complicated landscape of issues, including access to and payment for behavioral and mental health services for these populations.

In this policy review, we outline five areas that are essential to improve the mental health system to ensure that all children and families receive the help that they need following the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, including: Addressing issues of Medicaid payment and reimbursement; resolving long-standing issues of mental health fragmentation and workforce shortages; support for innovations in payment and delivery model; an evolution toward the continued use of technology; and a sharpened focus on racial/ethnic inequities in our systems of care.

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