

The Results are in COVID-19 Impact on Pediatric Mental Health

In a recently released white paper FAIR Health, a New York City based independent nonprofit, (created in 2009), that collects data and manages the nation's largest data base of privately billed health insurance claims confirms what many have suspected. COVID-19 has had a "profound impact on mental health especially on young people. For the purposes of the report Fair Health defines young people as those aged 0-22 years with two specific focus sub groups ages 13-18 and 19-22. Among the major findings: Directly from the FAIR Health summary

Overall Mental Health

- In March and April 2020, mental health claim lines¹ for individuals aged 13-18, as a percentage of all medical claim lines, approximately doubled over the same months in the previous year. All medical claim lines (including mental health claim lines), however, decreased by approximately half. That pattern of increased mental health claim lines and decreased medical claim lines continued through November 2020, though to a lesser extent.
- A similar pattern was seen for individuals aged 19-22, though the changes were smaller. In general, the age group 19-22 had mental health trends similar to but less pronounced than the age group 13-18.

Intentional Self-Harm

- Claim lines for intentional self-harm as a percentage of all medical claim lines in the 13-18 age group increased 90.71 percent in March 2020 compared to March 2019. The increase was even larger when comparing April 2020 to April 2019, nearly doubling (99.83 percent).
- Comparing August 2019 to August 2020 in the Northeast, for the age group 13-18, there was a 333.93 percent increase in intentional self-harm claim lines as a percentage of all medical claim lines, a rate higher than that in any other region in any month studied for that age group.

Overdoses and Substance Use Disorders

- For the age group 13-18, claim lines for overdoses increased 94.91 percent as a percentage of all medical claim lines in March 2020 and 119.31 percent in April 2020 over the same months the year before. Claim lines for substance use disorders also increased as a percentage of all medical claim lines in March (64.64 percent) and April (62.69 percent) 2020 as compared to their corresponding months in 2019.

Mental Health Diagnoses

- For the age group 6-12, from spring to November 2020, claim lines for obsessive-compulsive disorder and tic disorders increased as a percentage of all medical claim lines from their levels in the corresponding months of 2019.
- For the age group 13-18, in April 2020, claim lines for generalized anxiety disorder increased 93.6 percent as a percentage of all medical claim lines over April 2019, while major depressive disorder claim lines increased 83.9 percent and adjustment disorder claim lines 89.7 percent.

A March 2020 report revealed the 45% of adults reported that worry and stress had a negative impact on their own mental health. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that the prevalence of depression reported in June 2020 was nearly four times that rate of 2019 for the second quarter of the year. In addition the prevalence of anxiety was three times greater for the same time period a year earlier.

Just today Newsday reported that here on Long Island parents of special needs students noticed their children began to regress in academics and physical skills. Furthermore students, island wide felt isolated, distracted and disengaged. For some these feelings persisted for a full year.

It is clear that mental health issues are a very serious concern for all stakeholders as our healthcare professionals and government officials work towards the ultimate goal of returning all children safely to the classroom setting. A continued rise in mental health issues is expected and we must be vigilant and pro-active in preparing to help young people and their families to address existing and emerging concerns and crises.

For adults as well the NY State Office of Mental Health (OMH) continues to offer help on the COVID support helpline: **(1-844-863-9314)**

and the

Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) maintains a 24/7/365 HOPE line for alcohol and other drug related issues: **(1-877-846-7369)**.

For assistance with a mental health or addiction issue call us.

LECSA 631-851-1295

