Trends in Children’s Mental Health: Public Health Implications

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Objective:

To stimulate discussion of the role the public health community can play in addressing the epidemic of pediatric mental illness
The data make the case:

We are beyond a one-child-at-a-time approach.

Mental illness is a public health issue.

It takes a village....
Family-Centered Community-based System of Services for Children and Youth

Service gaps

■ >20% of children/youth have mental disorder
  – 20%-25% receive treatment
  – 40%-50% terminate services prematurely
  Factors: lack of access, transportation, finances, stigma

■ Chronically under-funded public mental health (MH) system focuses on individuals with severe impairment

■ Little support for prevention or services to children with emerging or mild/moderate conditions
Workforce issues

- Insufficient #s of child MH specialists, especially, child psychiatrists and providers of services to young children
- Administrative barriers in insurance plans limit access to existing providers
- Many forces leading families to seek help for MH problems in primary care
- Pediatric workforce faces many challenges
Pediatric primary care challenges

- Lack of comfort, training, evidence, payment...
- Limited MH / SA referral sources
- Unfamiliarity with existing MH / SA resources
- Silo mentality impeding communication, collaboration
Roles for the public health community....
Provide the population perspective

- Publicize MH trends
- Identify and address risk factors for childhood mental illness
- Identify and enhance protective factors
Expand partnerships

- Consumers (e.g., NAMI, Federation of Families)
- Professional associations of MH providers
- Academic pediatricians and psychiatrists
- Area Health Education Center
- Primary care clinicians (peds, fam med, NP, PA)
- Early Intervention system
- State department of ed / local school systems
- Juvenile Justice / DSS
- Medicaid / SCHIP agencies
- Insurers
Increase collaboration and coordination across “silos”

Examples:

- Community protocols (e.g., psychiatric emergencies, ADHD)
- MH resource guide
- Mixers
Foster policies favorable to MH integration in primary care

Examples:

- Bright Futures implementation
- Incentives for co-locating MH professional in primary care setting
- Payment (especially Medicaid and SCHIP) for all facets of mental health care
Champion the cause of prevention

Examples:

- Bright Futures
- Nurse-family Partnership (Olds model)
- Evidence-based parenting programs
- Environmental health (lead, mercury...)
- Healthy lifestyles (nutrition, physical activity, stress management, sleep...)

Improve early identification

Examples:

- MH screening at all ages
- Warning signs (child and family)
- Training of school / public health personnel
- Child care training / consultation
- Transition from EI program to schools
Incorporate MH services / perspective into public health programs

- Disaster preparedness
- Child service coordination
- Maternity care coordination
- Child care consultation
- School Health (!!!)
- High risk obstetric clinics
- Mental Health
Educate public

Examples:

- Parent education (anticipatory guidance, building resilience, early signs of distress)
- Public campaign addressing stigma
Advocate for resources and system changes

Examples:

- Fully implement insurance parity
- Subsidize child psychiatrists (e.g., consultation network)
- Incorporate MH care coordination into ECCS (Early Childhood Comprehensive Services) early childhood health plan
Monitor impact of changes

- Participating MH providers
- Claims data / Medicaid & SCHIP
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Persons receiving MH services by race / ethnicity
- Abuse / neglect rates; out-of-home placements
- Educational outcomes (drop-out, suspension, graduation rate)
- Juvenile crime rate
- Injuries
- Consumer / provider opinion
AAP resources from the Task Force on Mental Health (2004-present)

- Improving Mental Health Services in Primary Care: Reducing Administrative and Financial Barriers to Access and Collaboration (joint white paper with AACAP), *Pediatrics*, April 2009
- The Future of Pediatrics: Mental Health Competencies for Pediatric Primary Care (policy statement), *Pediatrics*, July 2009
AAP resources from the Task Force on Mental Health (continued)

- Strategies for System Change in Children’s Mental Health: A Chapter Action Kit
- www.aap.org/mentalhealth (e.g. state-level initiatives through contracts supported by MCHB)
- Coming in spring...
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