

MENTAL HEALTH- TO-INCARCERATION PIPELINE

Helping children find a path to success means providing the needed mental health support. In too many communities, failures in our public health systems and schools means the youth legal system becomes the default mental health provider.

Kids in Need of Care

1 in every 5 children between ages 3 -17 have a mental health diagnosis.

Provider Shortage

75% - 80% of youth who need mental health services don't receive them because of ...

- shortage of providers
- lack of affordable care
- lack of community-based services
- stigma



Racial Barriers to Access

13% of youth of color have access to mental health services compared to 31% of white youth.

Criminalization of Youth

Lack of services +
School police officers +
Zero tolerance policies =

Criminalization of unmet mental health needs.

DISPARITIES IN HEALTHCARE

Black and Latino boys with disabilities comprised 12% of all school arrests in 2015-2016.

Nationally, students with disabilities were arrested at 2.9 times the rate of students without disabilities.

THE MENTAL HEALTH-TO-SUPPORT PIPELINE

To dismantle the mental health to incarceration pipeline, we need a public health approach that meets the mental health challenges youth are facing.



Address Root Causes

- Housing insecurity
- Food insecurity
- Trauma
- Stigma
- Need for early detection

Stop Criminalizing Youth

- Remove police from schools
- End zero tolerance policies
- Stop criminalizing disorderly conduct, willful defiance, and vulgarity
- Raise the minimum age for youth prosecution to at least 14

Fund Care That Is

- Culturally and linguistically responsive
- Community-based
- Trauma-informed
- Voluntary!



Divert Children from the Legal System

- Promptly screen & assess youth for mental health challenges.
- Divert kids to appropriate community-based services.

