



Responding to the Crisis in Pediatric Mental Health: A Community Commitment to a System of Care

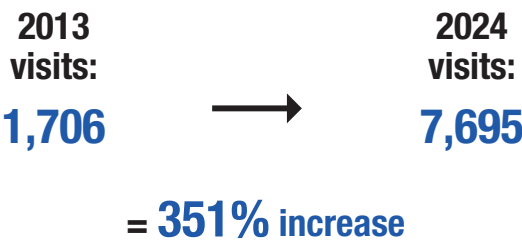


When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

A Community Crisis

The crisis in pediatric behavioral health has become increasingly clear over the last decade. Even before the pandemic, approximately 1 in 5 children had a mental illness, but less than half of the estimated 7.7 million children who needed services received them from a mental health provider, according to the University of Michigan study published in JAMA Pediatrics.

Emergency Department Visits at Nationwide Children’s With a Behavioral Health Diagnosis *Before opening the Psychiatric Crisis Department:*



Responding to a Need

How can a hospital system meet the ever-growing demand?

Through a coordinated, comprehensive, regional system of care, incorporating everything from prevention to intensive inpatient treatment. One that Nationwide Children’s Hospital set out to develop. In the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of patients presenting with a behavioral health concern in Nationwide Children’s Emergency Department rose sharply.

Nationwide Children’s surveyed community stakeholders about this growing local crisis, and the community identified gaps in unmet services and greater coordination of care. There was a clear need for a focused hub for crisis, inpatient and intermediate levels of care – amplifying work that had already begun. More importantly, children needed to be reached before they needed a hospital, and before there was a crisis.

With the opening of the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion in 2020, America’s largest treatment and research center on a pediatric medical campus, Nationwide Children’s system of care became fully operationalized, building on previous years of work.

Nationwide Children’s At a Glance

Our Mission: Providing exceptional care and best outcomes, regardless of ability to pay.

Our Reach: 88 counties in Ohio.

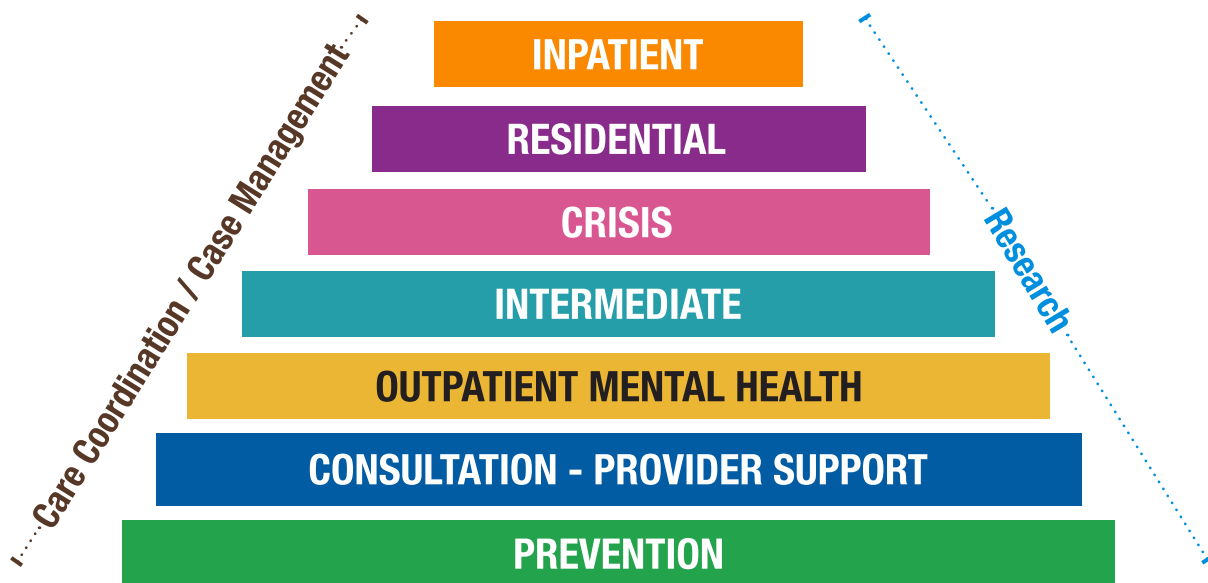
Nationwide Children’s is home to America’s largest pediatric mental and behavioral health research hospital on a pediatric campus, the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion.



“Our community work is intentionally designed to support local providers and agencies to address more mental health conditions at less-intensive levels, then refer to us when its necessary. That increases capacity to help children at every level. We believe this comprehensive approach will ultimately reduce Emergency Department use for crisis patients and reduce readmissions to the highest levels of care.”

- David Axelson, MD, Chief of Psychiatry, Medical Director, Big Lots Behavioral Health Services

Model of Response



Nationwide Children’s conceptualizes the community-wide system of care as a pyramid – the more intensive the level of care, the higher the level on the pyramid. Nearly all children can benefit from basic prevention programs, while only a relative few will need inpatient services. Each child, however, can receive the level of care they need.

System of Care



Prevention: The foundation of the system is reaching as many children as possible where they are – in schools, preschools and their communities. Teachers and staff members are trained to implement self-regulation and crisis recognition programs; families and caregivers learn strategies to help with parenting; students learn skills that will help them throughout their lives.

- **Signs of Suicide®.** Evidence-based, suicide prevention program. Rolled out in 283 schools to 92,904 students since 2015, resulting in 5,389 treatment referrals.
- **PAX Good Behavior Game®.** Evidence-based self-management program for elementary school students. Since 2018, the team has provided consultation services to more than 700 classrooms in 10 counties, and an additional 450 other support professionals who work in schools.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health.** Multi-disciplinary integrated assessment and child parent psychotherapy services, including a therapeutic preschool classroom.

Since launching in 2016, classroom consultation and training has been provided for over 20,185 early childhood professionals, which has impacted 119,300 children. The statewide rapid response line, Helping Ohio Preschoolers Excel (HOPE), has received over 3,800 calls.

- **Positive Parenting Program (Triple P).** The program provides support for parents to prevent family problems before they happen and encourages strategies to help children reach their full potential. Triple P has reached over 9,300 parents and early childhood teachers since 2018.
- **The Kids Mental Health Foundation.** A national organization created by Nationwide Children's Hospital to provide free, expert resources for every community in the United States. Since 2018, content has been seen by more than 24 million people.



The Kids Mental Health Foundation

Free Mental Health Resources for Parents, Caregivers, Educators

- Nationwide Children's Hospital is the founder and creator of the nation's leading children's mental health movement, The Kids Mental Health Foundation.
- The Foundation was created out of the hospital's commitment to address the youth mental health crisis – not just for kids in its backyard, but for kids everywhere. And now that work has reached more than 24 million people across the United States through the Foundation's mission to provide free mental health resources to communities across the U.S.

Visit [KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org)
for free resources to boost kids'
mental health and wellness.



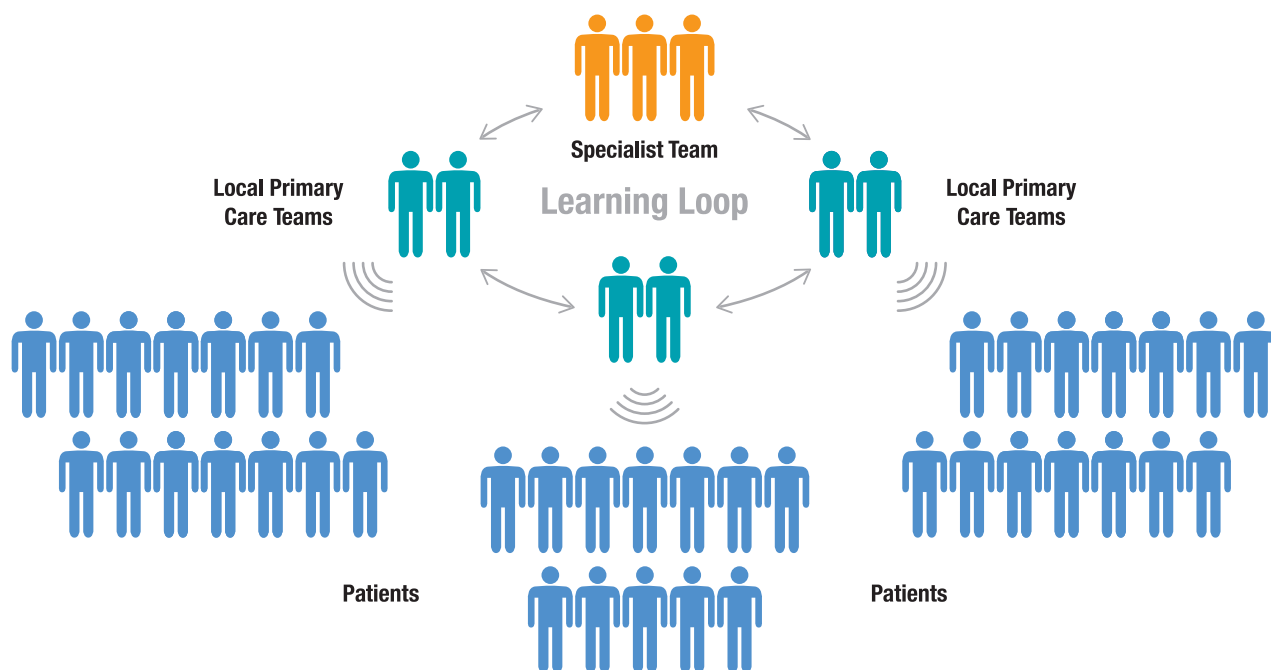
Consultation-Provider Support: Nationwide Children's works to connect its Behavioral Health experts with providers to improve their ability to manage common pediatric mental health concerns. Within the hospital, Psychiatry and Pediatric Psychology Neuropsychology are fully integrated into the care of patients across all pediatric medical sub-specialties.

- **Project ECHO.** A learning collaborative that allows providers to present cases to experts at Nationwide Children's via videoconference and learn from each other. Topics include ADHD, autism, depression, anxiety and trauma, among others. There have been 209 Behavioral Health ECHO sessions and over 434 total attendees since 2018.
- **Behavioral Health Treatment Insights and Provider Support (BH-TIPS).** A virtual Behavioral Health consultation service for community-based providers. Providers schedule 15-minute appointments with Nationwide

Children's psychiatrists for support and insight. Since launching in 2021, BH-TIPS has completed 907 consultations with 275 primary care providers in 38 Ohio counties.

- **Prescribing Recommendations/Guidelines.** Nationwide Children's accountable care organization, Partners For Kids®, issues quarterly updates that take into account medication efficacy and medical plan coverages to help primary care providers make appropriate prescriptions.
- **Behavioral Health Integration.** Nationwide Children's and Partners For Kids support community primary care practices that want to integrate behavioral health clinicians within their practice. This allows for increased access to behavioral health services within the patient's community. Since launching in May 2022, 87 practices have explored, prepared for or implemented this program, and 22 practices were active within the program.

Project ECHO Model





Outpatient Mental Health: Specialty Behavioral Health services that often occur through the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion at Nationwide Children's but may be delivered in the community, by Nationwide Children's providers as well. Outpatient services and programs are offered at more than 20 Nationwide Children's locations, including Primary Care Centers, and at more than 186 schools across Ohio. The Child Development Center and Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders provides evidence-based assessment and care for the broad range of needs that children with autism and their families have in the outpatient setting. Telehealth represented a crucial new strategy in 2023, with more than 95,086 visits completed.



Intermediate: Specialty Behavioral Health services that include home-based intensive treatment, intensive outpatient treatment and partial hospitalization. Intensive models of care for children with autism include Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention and Complex Behavior services, both of which use the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis to address symptoms and improve functioning. These services are delivered by Nationwide Children's for pediatric patients throughout the region.

For example, the Child and Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program in the Behavioral Health Pavilion is a day treatment program that opened in 2020 and offers intensive group-based, individual and family treatment to youth in a structured and supportive environment.



Residential: A number of central Ohio agencies have expertise in residential programs, and Nationwide Children's primary role at this level of care is using our integrated system to connect children and their families with those agencies.

Nationwide Children's is collaborating with The Buckeye Ranch to build a new residential facility in central Ohio. It includes a psychiatric residential treatment program, which is a new level of care in Ohio, that focuses on young people who are transitioning from hospitalization but still need access to residential treatment.

Nationwide Children's has more than 1,300 behavioral health staff members. 



Crisis: Short-term services that are designed for observation, triage and stabilization.

- **Psychiatric Crisis Department.** An Emergency Department specifically designed to triage, assess and treat patients in behavioral health crisis. In 2024 alone, it saw more than 7,695 visits.
- **Telecrisis Team.** Offers consultation and assistance when patients and families are experiencing a psychiatric crisis. It fields referrals from the Nationwide Children's-led Franklin County Youth Psychiatric Crisis Line, or refers families to the Critical Assessment and Treatment Program that helps patients and families in crisis that can be managed outside of the Crisis Department.
- **Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS):** Provides mental and behavioral health services to young people in crisis – sending specialists to respond on location in less than 60 minutes for emergent requests and within 24 hours for non-emergent requests. Follow-up care is available for up to six weeks after this visit.



Entrance to the Psychiatric Crisis Department, a behavioral health emergency department

2014

1,377 visits in the 9 months of the Psychiatric Emergency Evaluation Center

19,000+

Total unique Behavioral Health patients

150,000+

Total Behavioral Health outpatient visits

2024

7,695 total visits in the renamed Psychiatric Crisis Department

46,054

Total unique Behavioral Health patients

286,235

Total Behavioral Health outpatient visits

Inside the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion

At nine stories and 386,000 square feet, it is the largest pediatric mental health research hospital in America, integrating acute services with intensive outpatient programs and prioritizing patient safety in a colorful, friendly environment.

For a video tour, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/Pavilion](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/Pavilion)



NINTH FLOOR:

- Gym
- Outdoor Play Deck

EIGHTH FLOOR:

- Inpatient Units

SEVENTH FLOOR:

- Inpatient Units

FIFTH FLOOR:

- Partial Hospitalization Program
- Ronald McDonald Family Room
- Courtyards

FOURTH FLOOR:

- Outpatient Psychiatry Clinic
- Outpatient Therapy Clinic

THIRD FLOOR:

- Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit (YCSU)
- Behavioral Health Administrative Offices
- Faculty Offices

FIRST FLOOR:

- Psychiatric Crisis Department with Extended Observation Suite
- Critical Assessment and Treatment Clinic
- Telecrisis
- Mobile Response and Stabilization Services
- Sanctuary

LOWER FLOOR:

- Cafeteria
- Gift Shop
- Conference/Training Rooms

SECOND FLOOR:

- Mood and Anxiety Program
- Family Based Intensive Therapy (FBIT)
- Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research
 - Center for Suicide Prevention and Research



Inpatient: Inpatient services offer the highest level of mental health care, sometimes going beyond the shorter duration of crisis services, though inpatient services are closely tied to crisis services.



Each inpatient room was designed with the patient's safety in mind.

Inpatient Psychiatric Units: Nationwide Children's is currently staffing 39 inpatient psychiatric beds across three specially designed units, including one unit for children with neurobehavioral disorders. An additional 27 beds on the Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit and Extended Observation Unit bring total beds to 66 in the Behavioral Health Pavilion.

The Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit (YCSU) is a unique feature of inpatient services. This 16-bed unit allows for four hours per day of intensive therapy, usually over the course of three to five days, with a 1:2 therapist-to-patient ratio.

Primary goals are stabilization, linkage to ongoing care and safety planning. A study published in *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* showed that the YCSU is a promising alternative to lengthy hospitalization. Findings also revealed significant reductions in suicidal ideation at the three-month follow-up.

In addition, there are two aspects of the system that help bind the levels together, integrate the system of care and expand its impact:

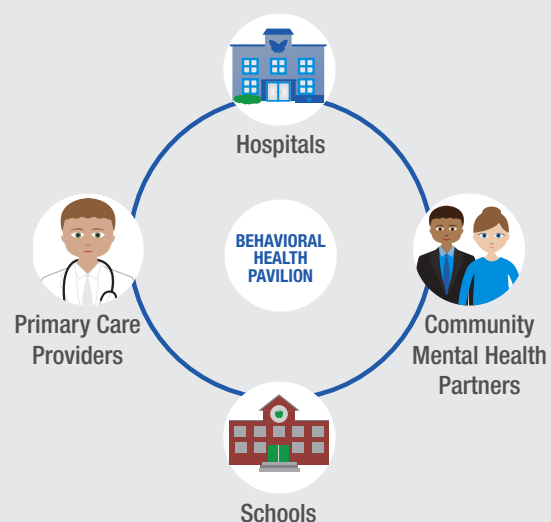
Care Coordination/Case Management:

Children may move up and down the levels or need a number of services that exist within a single level. Much about this can be confusing or difficult to manage for a family, especially if they face other challenges. Care coordinators and case managers work with providers and the families on everything from scheduling to community support linkage.

Interventional Psychiatry: Behavioral Health started providing ECT in June 2021. This potentially life-saving treatment has been provided to 44 patients to date who have not responded to other intensive interventions on our inpatient services. Most of these patients, with conditions such as malignant catatonia, treatment refractory major depression, and severe suicidality, have shown benefit from the course of ECT.

The Pavilion as a "Hub"

The Behavioral Health Pavilion serves as a "hub" that reaches out to other "spokes" in the community, such as primary care providers, schools, hospitals and community mental health partners.





Research: The **Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research** is housed in the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion. In addition to collaborative efforts across the Nationwide Children's Hospital campus, institute members work in collaboration with The Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health and the OSU Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research. The mission of faculty within the institute is to conduct innovative translational, clinical, and epidemiological research focused on etiology, prevention, and treatment of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders.

- **Center for Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR):** Recently awarded a P50 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, the CSPR hosts four principal investigators and a large staff to sustain the work of multiple NIMH-funded projects. The Center for Suicide Prevention and Research bridges Behavioral Health services and Nationwide Children's Abigail Wexner Research Institute. Since its inception in 2015, it has been heavily focused on implementation of the evidence-based Signs of Suicide® program in Nationwide Children's region of care, and it has also published nationally prominent studies on issues including racial suicide disparities and media coverage of suicide.

- **Autism Research Program:** Focuses on identification, characterization and genetics of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as well as treatment efficacy and effectiveness studies. As a member of the Autism Care Network, Nationwide Children's is focused on research that leads to better autism care, delivered at scale and at speed, to improve health and quality of life for children with ASD and their families throughout North America.

The Center for Biobehavioral Health: Integrates the study and practice of behavioral health with physical health specialties. Among the center's wide-ranging efforts are neuroimaging to assess cognitive deficits that increase risk of social and behavioral health issues in cancer survivors, children with brain injuries, children born preterm and many other pediatric populations; and the development of evidence-based guidelines to support the mental health of children and families diagnosed with complex physical illnesses.

Nationwide Children's is now working to harness its large system of care clinical services at every care level to inform research across other Behavioral Health disciplines.

INSTITUTE FOR MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESEARCH LEADERSHIP



The Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research is led by Eric Youngstrom, PhD, a nationally renowned psychologist specializing in the relationship of mood and psychopathology, and the clinical assessment of children and families. Dr. Youngstrom's research focuses on improving clinical assessment instruments for differential diagnoses and on predicting a child's treatment progress, especially for bipolar disorder. In addition to being the institute's inaugural director, he was the first recipient of the DiMarco Family Endowed Chair in Mental and Behavioral Health Research at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Dr. Youngstrom was twice elected president of the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, and was president of the Society of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods. He consulted on the 5th revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) and chaired the Work Group on Child Diagnosis for the International Society for Bipolar Disorders.

He is the first recipient of the Early Career Award from the Society of Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology; an elected full member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology; and a fellow of the American Psychological Association (Divisions 5, 12, and 53), as well as the Association for Psychological Science and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.

Considerations and Lessons Learned

Every community is different and needs to consider a system of pediatric behavioral health care that works best for them. Nationwide Children's learned lessons during its development process that could prove valuable for others.

Key questions to ask:

- **What will give us the most “bang for the buck?”** Many children need help, and with limited resources, it's important to address how the most children can receive services in the most appropriate way.
- **What will address the need at the “front doors”?** Many areas struggle to manage the increasing number of patients with mental health concerns who arrive in the Emergency Department, or to best triage patients who enter the system in other ways. It's crucial to appropriately manage those early/initial encounters.
- **How will staffing take place?** There is a workforce shortage at every level of mental health care. A plan for filling the positions that are necessary to provide services is critical.

Other Important Considerations:

- Measurement of outcomes - more patients is not necessarily better
 - Consider outcomes of:
 - Improving access
 - Reducing inpatient readmission rates
 - Decreasing the number of youth suicides
- Promote health equity into all initiatives
- Ongoing and systematic training and retaining personnel
- Building culture during rapid growth
- Developing an academic and research mission
- Faculty burnout
- Leveraging technology
- Community partnerships
- Managing new service developments in the midst of continued growing demand

Nationwide Children's focused on several principles to help shape the system of care:

- Think systematically about the care continuum
- Prevention is part of the continuum
- Coordinating with community providers is critical
- Invite participation from a wide-range of stakeholders

The work at Nationwide Children's is far from over. But by having established this system of care, we are ready to handle what comes next - and learn and grow from it.

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NationwideChildrens.org/Pediatrics-Online



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CHILDREN'S®**

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.