Vermont Chapter
INCORPORATED IN VERMONT

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

Vermont Medical Society

Vermont Psychiatric ASSOCIATION

Pediatric Mental Health

Immediate Investment Necessary to Meet Pediatric Mental Health Needs of Vermont's Children & Adolescents

While not new to the pandemic, COVID-19 has exacerbated the pediatric mental health crisis in Vermont, increasing the acute needs of Vermont's children and families waiting in emergency departments for extended periods of time without access to essential mental health services. In May of 2020, emergency department visits from youth were 66% higher than in May 2019, and 35% higher from April through December 2020 as compared to the previous year.

On behalf of the Vermont Medical Society, the Vermont Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter we urge you to take immediate action to address the critical mental health needs of Vermont's children and families by investing sustainable & appropriate funding now. A comprehensive and multi-facted approach must include short-term strategies to alleviate the current acute boarding crisis, as well as longer-term interventions designed to support the growing need for mental health services both inside and outside the hospital setting. We encourage you to leverage existing resources and innovative solutions that include, but are not limited to:

Infrastructure

Increase mental health capacity by funding the creation and staffing of community based & transitional units such as:

- Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK),
- Mobile Response units (pilot in Rutland),
- Development of safe ED psychiatric treatment space such as emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment & Healing (emPATH) units.

Workforce

Fully fund initiatives to bolster the existing mental health workforce capacity by supporting collaborative care models, such as the Vermont Child Psychiatry Access Program (CPAP) as a service available full-time for pediatric primary care providers statewide.

Data

Require the Department of Mental Health to implement statewide chart auditing/quality measurement of children admitted to emergency departments for mental health services to identify gaps in care/treatment services to make systematic change, which must include a process to synthesize chart audit results to review and implement clinically appropriate improvements.

Please contact Stephanie Winters at swinters@vtmd.org for more information