

Virginia trails nation in mental health access for children

Increasing access and coordination of quality mental health care for children leads to better outcomes

THE ONSET OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS CAN START EARLY IN CHILDHOOD



Age 6
IS THE
MEDIAN AGE OF
onset for anxiety disorders



of all lifetime cases
of mental illness

BEGIN BY
Age 14

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS ARE PREVALENT ACROSS VIRGINIA



KIDS LIVE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION IN VIRGINIA

75,000

YOUTH
(AGE 12-17)

report suffering from at least one major
depressive episode in the past year

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AFFECT MANY CHILDREN IN VIRGINIA, BUT ACCESS AND TREATMENT IS LIMITED

VIRGINIA IS RANKED

49th

FOR THE
RATE

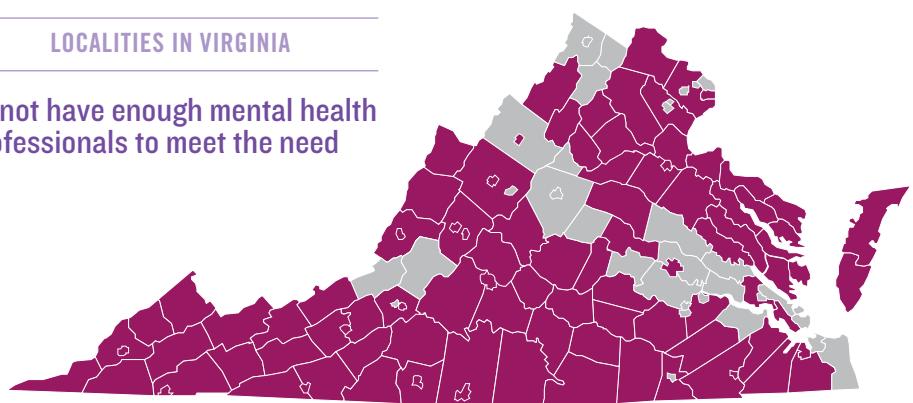
of youth with major depression
who did not receive mental
health services in the nation

That means 3 out of 4 youth in Virginia
with depression and who are most at risk of
suicidal thoughts, difficulty in school, and
difficulty in relationships with others do not
get the treatment needed to support them.

100 of 133

LOCALITIES IN VIRGINIA

do not have enough mental health
professionals to meet the need



* All sources available at vakids.org/elections



Questions for Candidates

#VAVotes4Kids

- 1** The current administration and General Assembly endorsed a comprehensive road map for the future of Virginia's behavioral health system, called STEP-VA. If STEP-VA is fully implemented, the 40 community services boards will be able to provide a select set of services to adults and children with behavioral health needs. **What do you think about the STEP-VA model and would you support its continuation if elected?**

- 2** Virginia ranks 40th in the nation in the availability of mental health professionals. The workforce shortage among specialized mental health professionals is even more pronounced. For example, there are only 236 child psychiatrists in Virginia (or 13 per 100,000 children). **If elected, how will you address this critical shortage of qualified mental health providers in Virginia?**

- 3** Pediatric primary care providers routinely identify and manage their patients' behavioral health needs, yet two-thirds of pediatricians report a lack of training in treatment of children's behavioral health disorders. Research shows that integrating mental health and primary care services can improve health outcomes. **What actions, if any, do you think Virginia should take to support behavioral health and primary care integration?**

- 4** Research on child development tells us that the foundation for sound mental health is built early in life. Although not often recognized, very young children can experience significant mental health problems. **What would you propose to support the social-emotional development of Virginia's young children and to provide access to mental health services for our youngest children and their families?**

- 5** In 2016, Virginia ranked 49th in the nation for the rate of youth with major depression who did not receive any mental health treatment. That means 76% of youth in Virginia who live with depression and are most at risk of suicidal thoughts and difficulty in school do not get the treatment they need to support them. There are many barriers to quality mental health treatment for children, including: insurance type, place of residence, lack of access, and stigma. **What do you view as the most significant barrier to effective mental health care for children and adolescents in Virginia, and how would you propose addressing this barrier?**

- 6** Many individuals with serious mental health disorders experience the first signs of illness during adolescence or early adulthood, and long delays often occur between symptom onset and treatment. Due to the lack of coordination between the child and adult mental health systems, many adolescents and young adults with serious mental health disorders fall through the cracks. **What steps do you think Virginia should take to bridge the divide between the child and adult mental health systems?**

- 7** A majority of youth committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice in Virginia require mental health services. In 2016, over 64% of youth who entered Virginia juvenile justice facilities demonstrated symptoms of one or more mental health disorders. Additionally, more than three in five of these youth were prescribed psychotropic medication at some point in their lives. **How would you support the behavioral health needs of children who come in contact with the juvenile justice system?**

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