

11.26 Mental Health Needs for Children

Resolution passed 2017

Whereas, mental health issues for children and young adults are misdiagnosed or never identified; and

Whereas, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) up to one in five youth experience a mental health disorder, which is described as “serious deviations from expected cognitive, social and emotional development” – such as anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, alcohol or substance abuse, and depression; and

Whereas, research also shows that most mental health conditions will emerge or begin to manifest symptoms by age 14 and the prevalence of mental health illness among children is a critical issue due to the effects on the child, their family, and the community; and

Whereas, it is imperative that parents and families are part of any school-based or medical decision-making team that provides early intervention, preventive programs and/or mental health services. A strong and trusting relationship among the providers, school, school-based mental health professionals, school leadership, educators, and parents is essential to support positive student mental, behavioral, interpersonal, and academic outcomes.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that state and local policies prioritize the funding and availability of mental health professionals for school-based mental health interventions, services—especially at pre-kindergarten and elementary school levels—and ensure access to integrated, accessible, and culturally competent community-based services. Schools are uniquely situated to provide mental health prevention and intervention models and provide appropriate connections to mental health services and providers, as they have daily contact with students and families; and be it further

Resolved, that greater attention and resources should be provided for mental health early intervention and prevention services for non-school aged youth and their families. Early intervention and prevention can help to address a child's behavioral and mental needs before symptoms exacerbate into more detrimental social, emotional or academic behaviors or activities; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA urges policymakers to prioritize mental health and illness education, early intervention, prevention, and access to school and community-based mental health personnel and services.