



BOB CASEY

FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Youth Mental Health Data Act

U.S. Senators Bob Casey, Sherrod Brown, and Cory Booker

Our Nation is just beginning to respond to the massive unmet need for youth mental health support

Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes among youth, affecting [one in five children](#). In 2021, [over 40%](#) of high school students and [nearly 60%](#) of female students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness. A shortage of pediatric and school-based mental health professionals and inadequate capacity for early intervention poses a serious threat to children's futures. Untreated mental health disorders are [associated](#) with family dysfunction, poor school performance and future incarceration, substance use disorder, unemployment, and unplanned pregnancies. Further, since 2010, rates of youth suicide have [risen](#), making suicide the [second leading](#) cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 20-34 in 2021.

Integrating data on youth mental health is critical to respond to the crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic raised our Nation's awareness of the mental health challenges of our youth, leading to historic investments in school and community-based mental health, workforce development, and other initiatives to support youth mental health. In order to maximize the effect of current and future investments in youth mental health, it is critical to aggregate and leverage data on youth mental health needs and interventions so that resources can be targeted where they will have the greatest impact.

The Youth Mental Health Data Act

The Youth Mental Health Data Act is no-cost legislation that would create a federal task force on youth mental health data integration, comprised of representatives from federal agencies, medical societies and nonprofits, youth with lived experience, and media and technology companies.

The task force would develop a national strategy to improve youth mental health data systems, including:

- Integrating data systems to enable real-time, longitudinal surveillance of youth mental health trends;
- Tracking the use of electronic health records among pediatric primary and mental health care providers and the use of, and outcomes associated with, innovative treatment approaches;
- Developing public-private research partnerships on youth mental health;
- Using dissemination and implementation science to scale up evidence-based or evidence-informed mental health prevention, screening, and treatment in systems that serve youth;
- Studying social media and digital technology's impact on youth mental health and identifying opportunities for the use of technology to engage youth and families in positive mental health behaviors and suicide prevention, including use of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline;
- Facilitating information sharing between federally-funded research and programs addressing youth mental health in order to maximize the impact of such programs; and
- Creating a public website with real-time information on youth mental health needs, relevant federally-funded projects, and opportunities for community organizations to support youth mental health.