

# The Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Youth and Families

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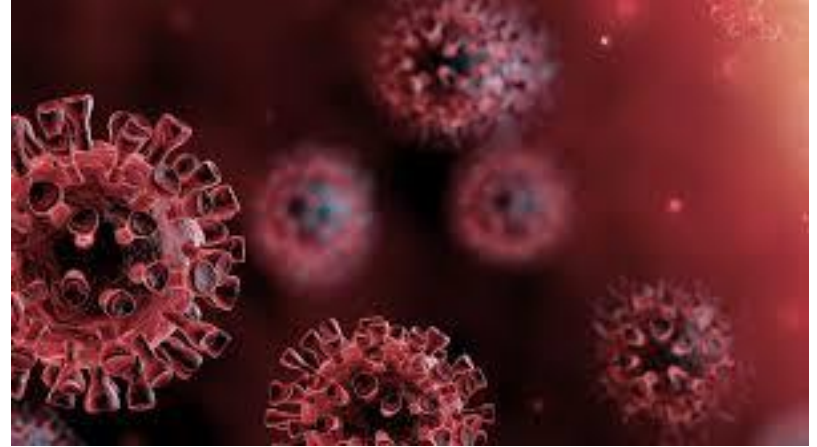


# My Background

- Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychologist
- Clinical Director, Colorado Springs Division at Children's Hospital Colorado and Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine
- Clinical expertise in treatment of child and adolescent mental health concerns across the continuum of care

# Unique Challenges of COVID-19

- Stress/Anxiety
  - COVID-19
  - School/Future
  - Virtual learning
- Mood Concerns
  - Grief related to loss of important milestones and relationships (e.g., graduation)
  - Social isolation
  - Unstructured schedule
- Increased Conflict between Family Members
  - Result of increased stress/anxiety
  - Changing dynamics



# COVID-19 Balancing Act

- How many roles are you juggling?
  - Parent
  - Employee
  - Educator
  - Spouse
  - Chef
  - Friend
  - ???



# Parenting During COVID

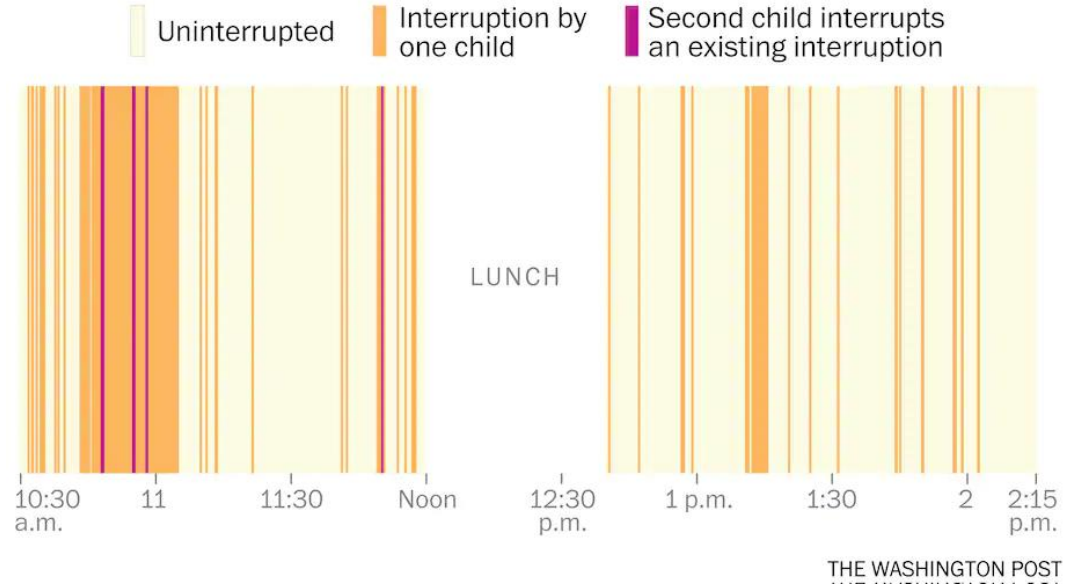
- 27% of parents have reported a worsening in their own mental health
- 48% of parents have reported loss of regular childcare
- 21% of parents have reported having to change/reduce their work hours due to changes in school/childcare, while 7% of parents have had to quit their job
  - Of those who have remained employed, 43% of parents report being unable to perform optimally at work and 45% report having to revise their career goals
  - 53% of parents report feeling guilty when working due to decreased ability to attend to childcare duties and 43% report guilt when caregiving because they are not attending to work
    - This is despite parents working, on average, 1 hour more per workday



## Balancing work and parenting in the pandemic

One day, two parents documented how often their two children interrupted a portion of the workday.

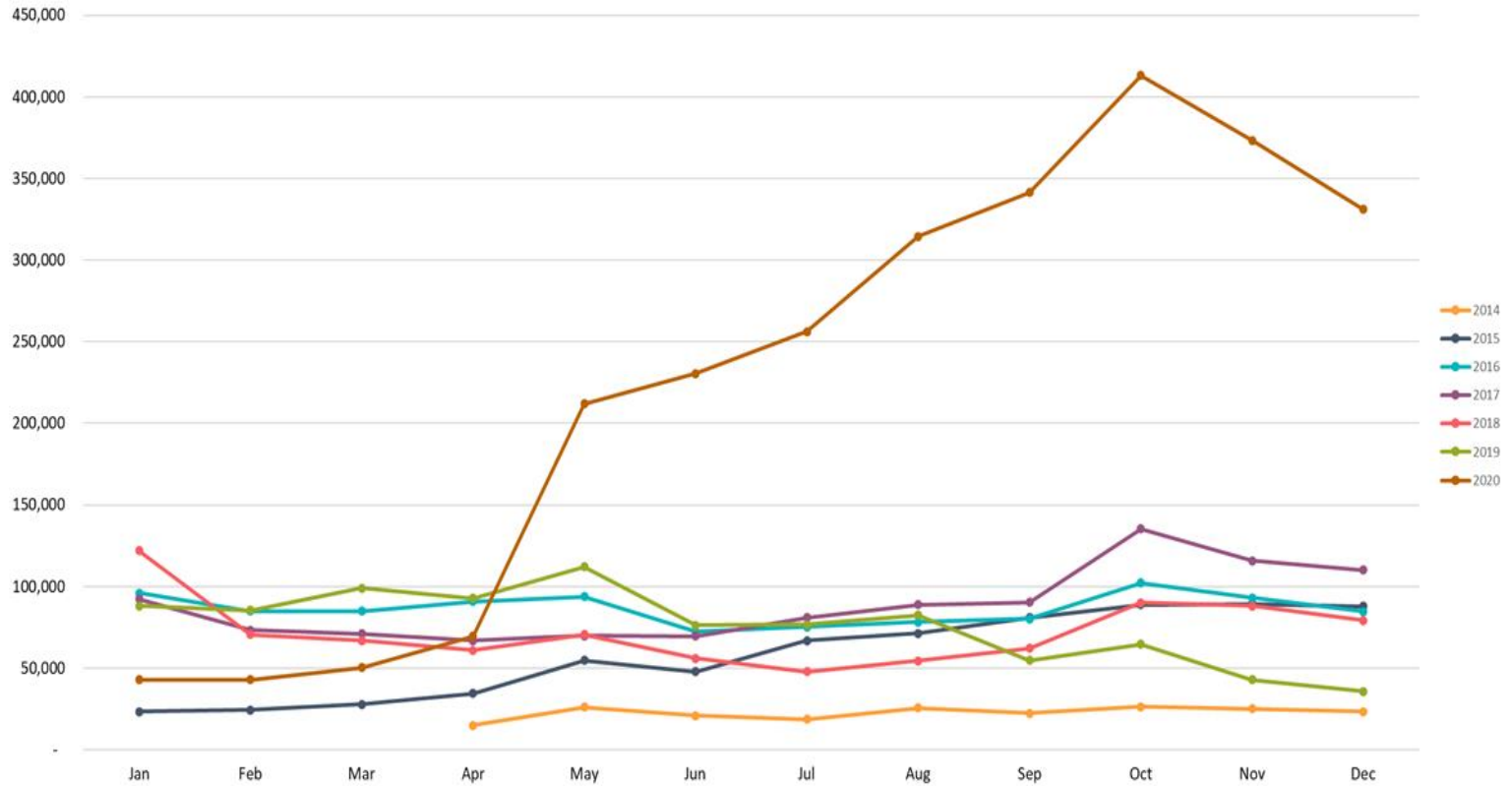
- 15 interruptions per hour
- Average uninterrupted time was 3.5 minutes



# Mental Health America Screening Data 2020

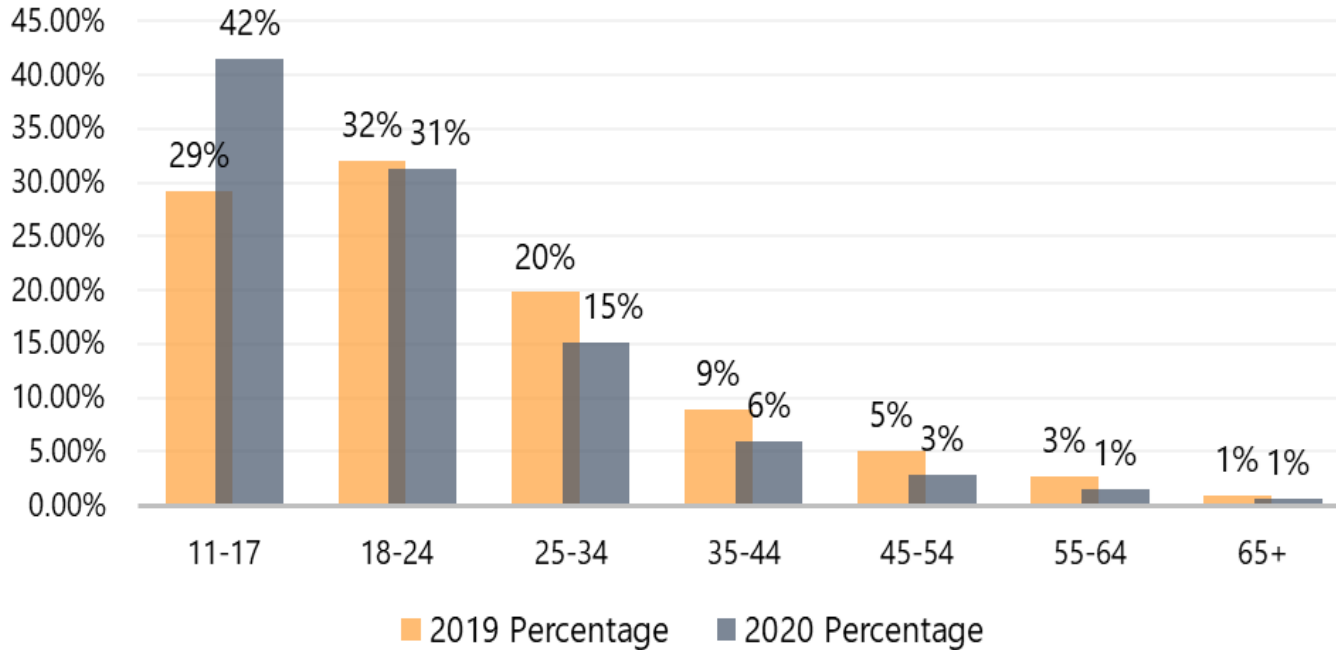
- Significant increase in number of individuals completing screeners for anxiety and depression
- The number of individuals with moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety are increasing and remain at rates higher than pre-COVID
- Increasing numbers of individuals are reporting frequent thoughts of suicide and self-harm
- Pre-adolescents and adolescents are experiencing significant concerns
  - Increased number completing screeners
  - Greater likelihood of reporting moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression
  - Higher likelihood of experiencing thoughts of suicide and self-harm, particularly LGBTQ+ youth
- Many individuals report that loneliness or isolation is contributing to their mental health concerns
- The impact varies by race and ethnicity

Number of Screens by Month: 2014-2020

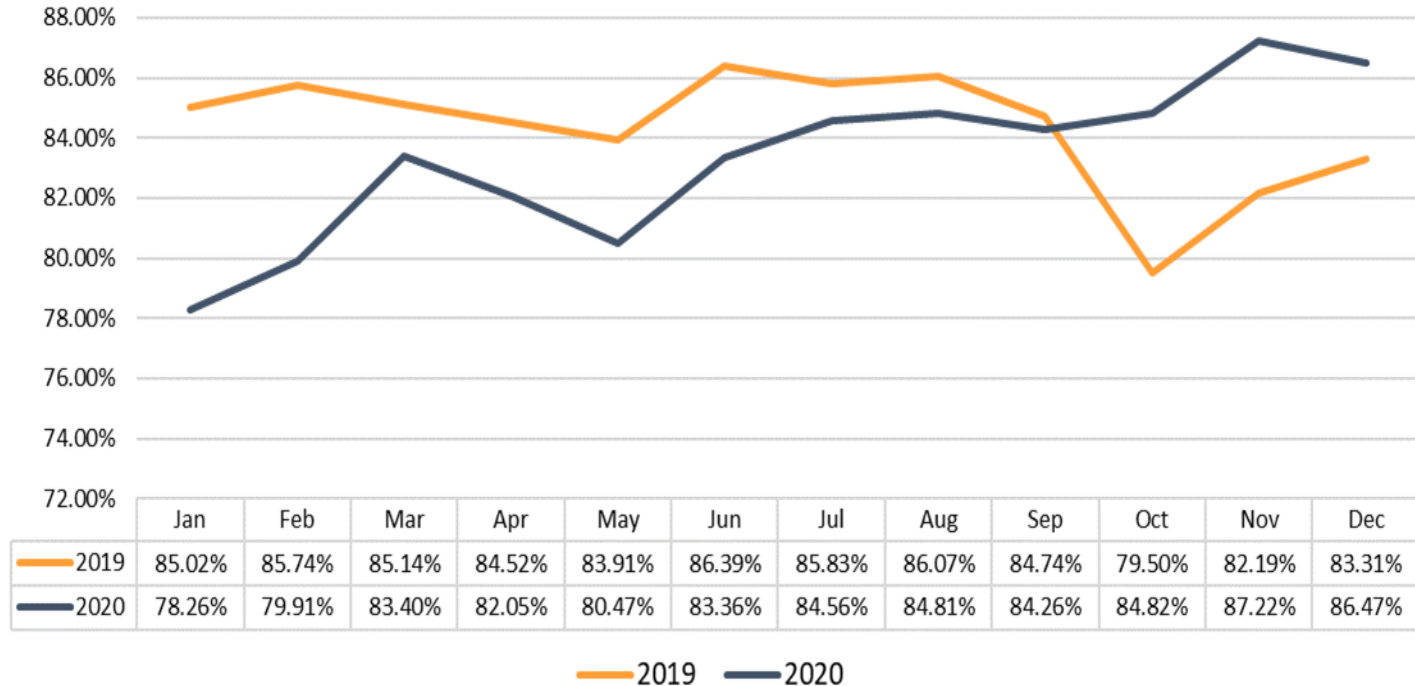




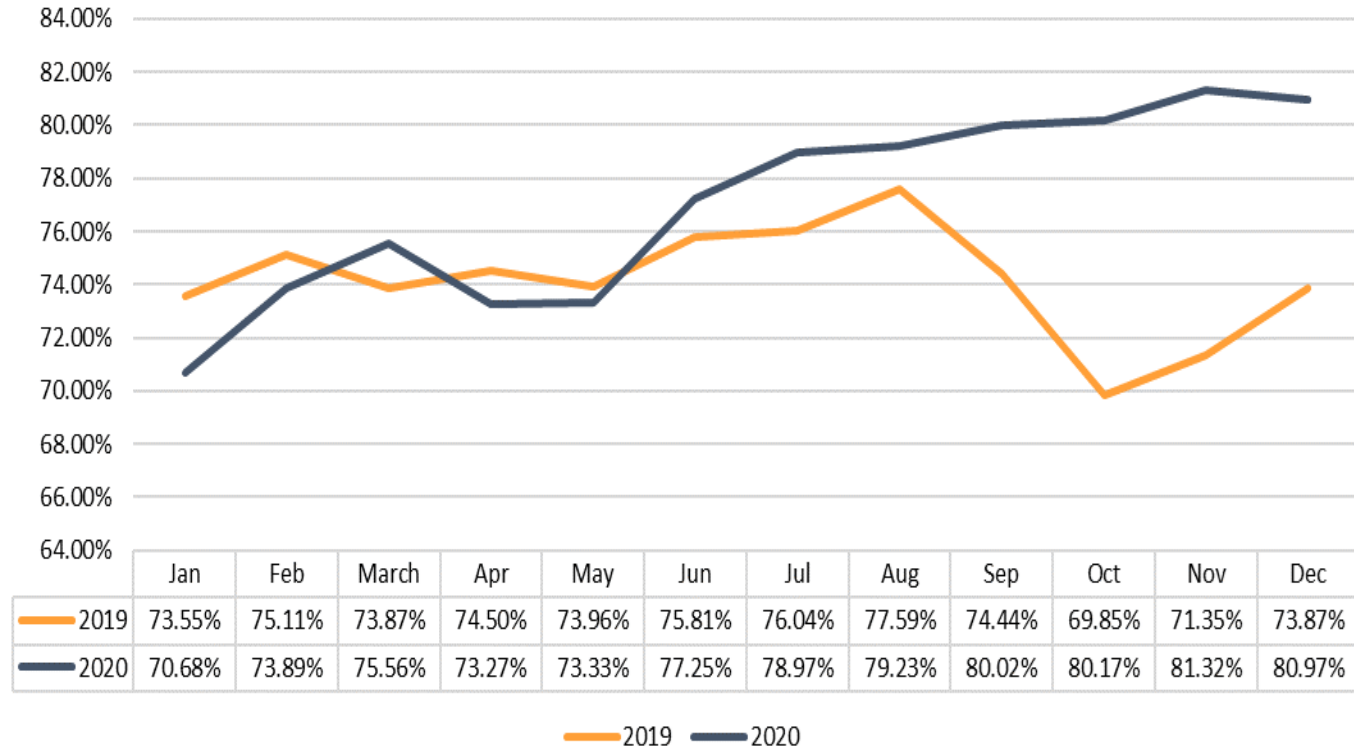
## Greater Proportion of Youth Screeners in 2020



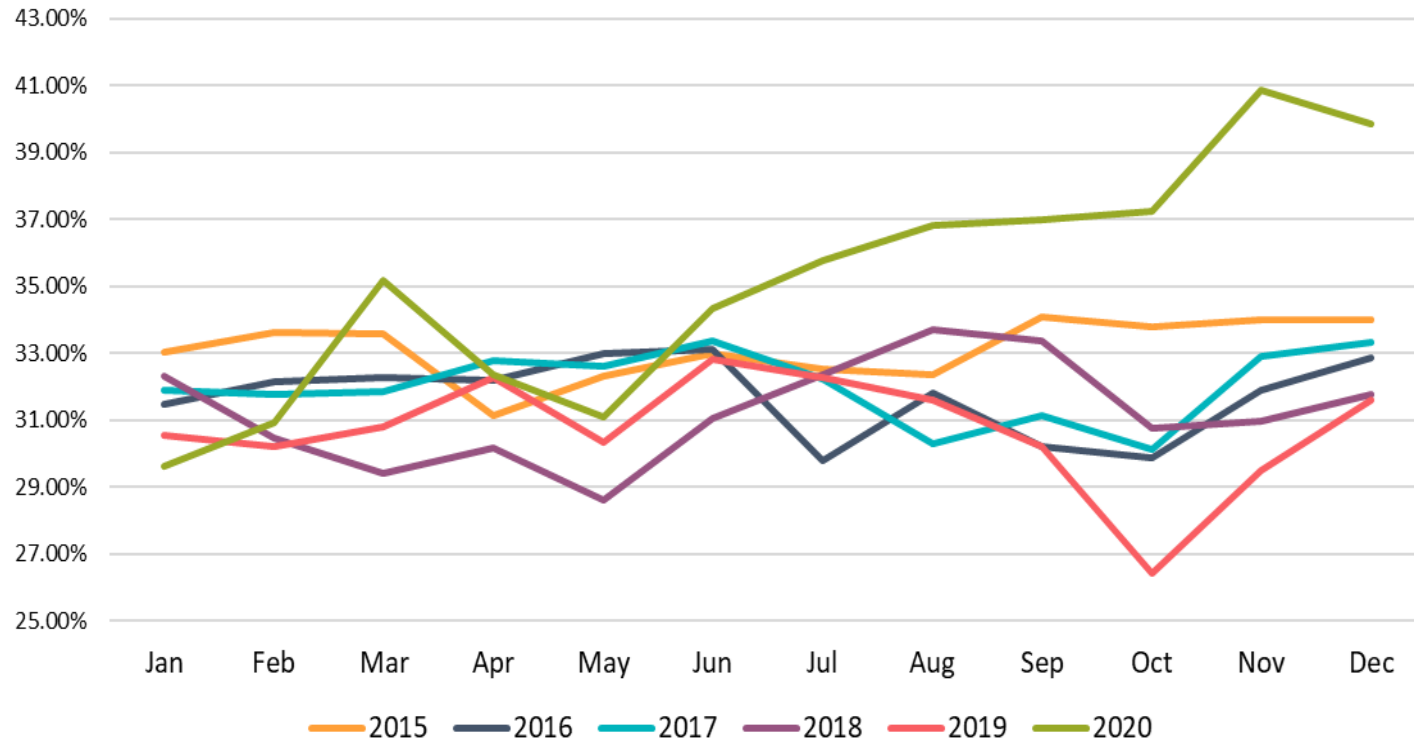
## Rates of Moderate to Severe Depression: 2019 vs. 2020



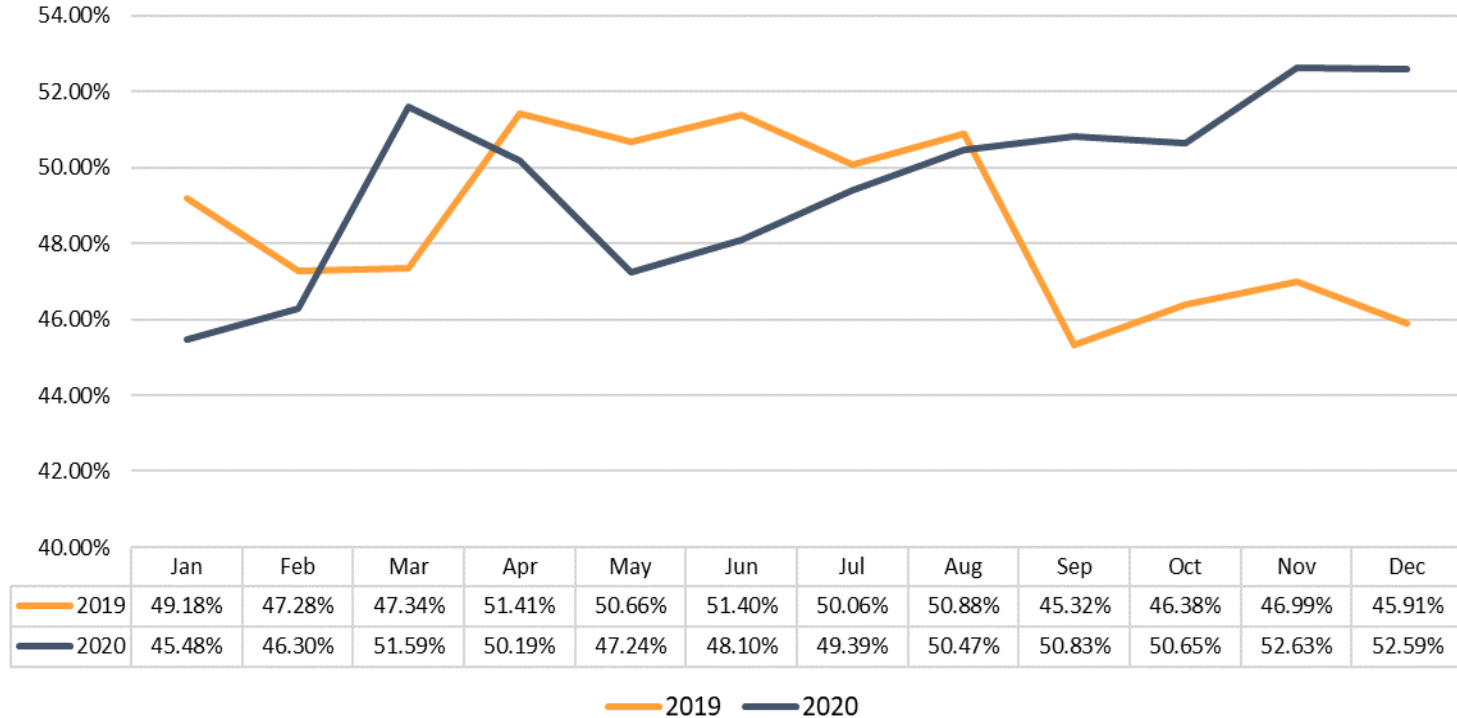
## Rates of Moderate to Severe Anxiety: 2019 vs. 2020



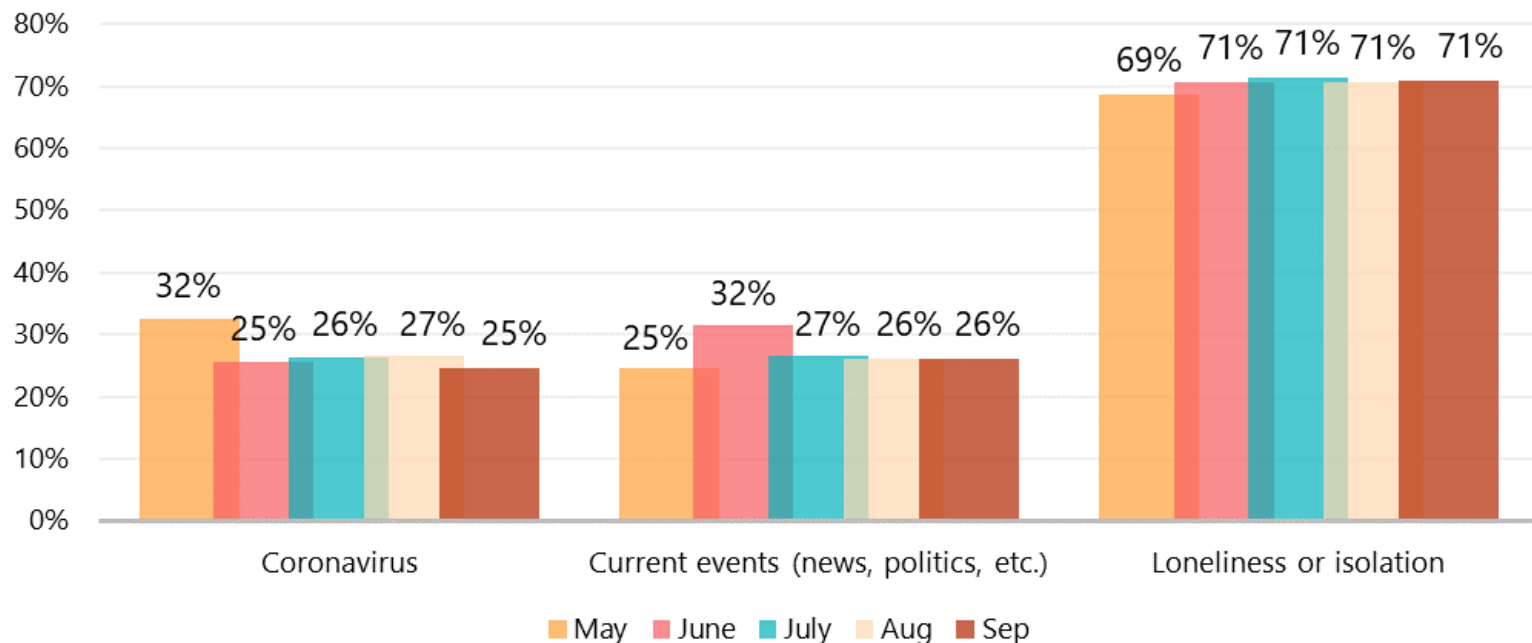
## Rate of Reported Frequent Suicidal Ideation 2015-2020



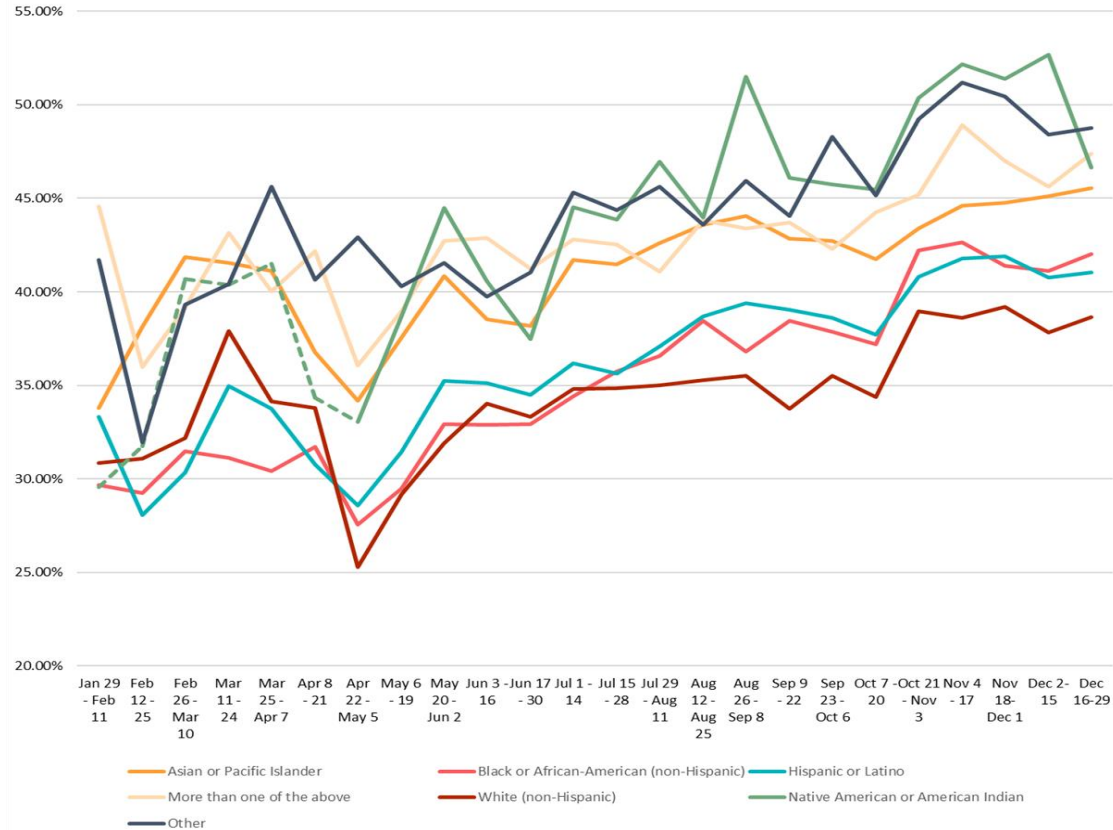
## Rates of Frequent Suicidal Ideation Among Youth (Ages 11-17): 2019-2020



## Changes in Top Three Mental Health Concerns May-September 2020



**Percent Reporting "Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself"  
More Than Half or Nearly Every Day (PHQ-9)**



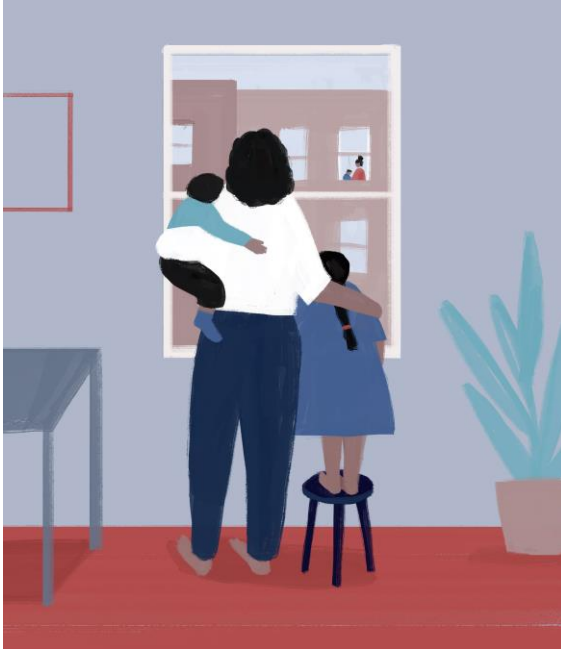
# How to Talk to Kids

- Discuss topics openly and remain calm
  - Take cues from your child
- Consider ages when responding
  - Children: Brief, simple, reassuring
  - Tweens: More likely to ask “what if”; may need assistance separating reality from rumors and/or fantasy
  - Teens: Provide honest, accurate, factual, information
- Empathize and validate
- Be reassuring (without empty promises)
- Focus on things they can control





# How Can Families Best Cope with COVID-19



- Monitor Media Exposure
- Maintain a Routine
- Healthy Modeling
- Social Connection
- Watch for Warning Signs

# Monitor Media Exposure



- Use screens for social connection
- Choose quality content
- Use media together
- Talk with teachers about offline activities
- Limits are still important

# The Power of Routine

- Predictability and consistency are key!
- As normal as possible
  - Discuss as a family when not possible
- Prepare but adjust when needed
- Schedule breaks and fun!



# Working From Home

- Consistent workspace
- Have “work hours”
- Realistic expectations
- Implement a transition plan

## EXPECTATION

vs

## REALITY

1. Work from home

Home becomes work



# Back to Basics: Healthy Modeling

- Eating healthy
- Adequate sleep
- Regular exercise
- Self-care
- Handwashing, social distancing, wearing masks, etc.



# Sleeping Concerns

- Maintain a schedule
  - Wake and sleep times
  - Minimize naps
- Use the bed ONLY for sleeping
- Limit screen use in evening
- Bedtime routine



# Social Connection & Positive Parenting

- Be ready to provide extra attention and foster connections
- Set clear expectations
- Create goals
- Offer incentives
- Be a good model



# How Can I Help if My Child is Struggling???

- Recognize that loneliness, boredom, anxiety, stress, and panic are all to be expected!
- Watch for significant changes in your child's mood or behavior
- Validate their feelings and provide reassurance
- Teach and model healthy coping skills
  - Breathing exercises, mindfulness, distraction, social connections (virtual or in person)





# Warning Signs of Mental Health Concerns



- Be on the lookout for significant changes in behavior or personality!
  - Acting out/tantrums
  - Irritable/tearful
  - Intrusive thoughts/worries
  - Isolating or withdrawing
  - Doesn't seem to enjoy activities
  - Changes to sleeping or eating habits
  - Less goal oriented

# When to Seek Professional Help



- The pandemic is far from over! We expect to see ongoing changes in behaviors...it is our job to keep a close eye
- If there are significant changes that lead to dangerous or unsafe behaviors then you should seek professional help
  - If there are changes that don't lead to unsafe behaviors, additional support may still be helpful...both for you and your child

# Resources

- Mental Health America ([mhanational.org/covid19](https://mhanational.org/covid19))
  - COVID 19 Blogs and Webinars
  - Information on: Caregiving/Parenting; BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Communities; Wellness and Coping Skills
- National Association of School Psychologists (<https://www.nasponline.org/>)
  - Care for Caregivers: Tips for Families and Educators
  - Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19
- Child Mind Institute (<https://childmind.org/>)
  - Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus Crisis
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (<https://www.cstsonline.org/>)
  - Helping Teens Manage COVID-19 Pandemic Challenges
  - Family Readiness: Preparing Your Family for Uncertain Events During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Disasters
  - Managing Family Conflict While Home During the COVID-19: Intimate Partners
  - Tips for Coping when Quarantined with COVID-19 Family Members

# Resources

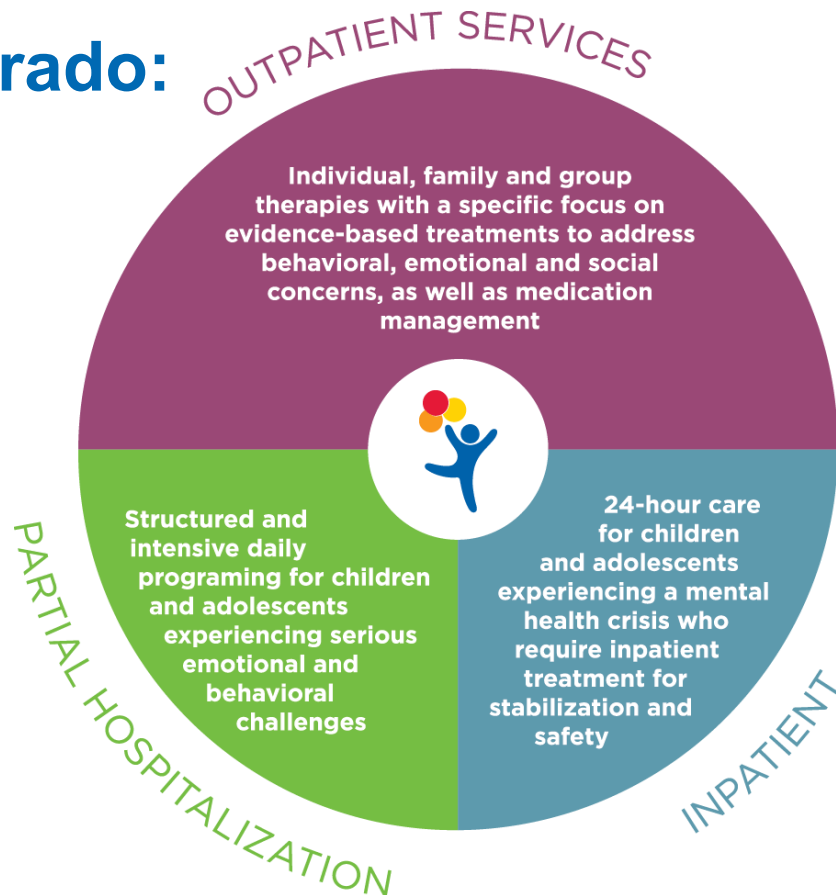
- Community Resources
  - Children's Hospital Colorado - (720) 777-6200
  - Colorado Crisis Services - (844) 493-8255
- National Resources
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273 - 8255
  - Crisis Text Line - Text "MHA" to 741741
  - The Trevor Project (suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth) (866) 488-7386 or text "START" to 678678
  - Dial 2-1-1 (United Way program that provides assistance with finding food, paying for housing/bills, accessing free childcare, and other essential services) - dial 211 or visit 211.org
- Online Resources
  - [childmindinstitute.org](https://childmindinstitute.org)

# Children's Hospital Colorado: Continuum of Care

Single Point of Entry!

If you are interested in pursuing any services within PMHI you can call now to speak with an intake coordinator

(720) 777 - 6200



# Children's Hospital Colorado: Mental Health Services

- Outpatient Services
  - 3 Locations: Anschutz, Highlands Ranch Therapy Care Center, Broomfield
- Partial Hospitalization
  - 2 Locations: Anschutz, Broomfield (teens)
- Inpatient Psychiatric Services
  - 1 Location: Anschutz
- Psychiatric Emergency Department
  - 2 Locations: Anschutz & Colorado Springs (telehealth evaluations available in Broomfield and South Campus/Highlands)

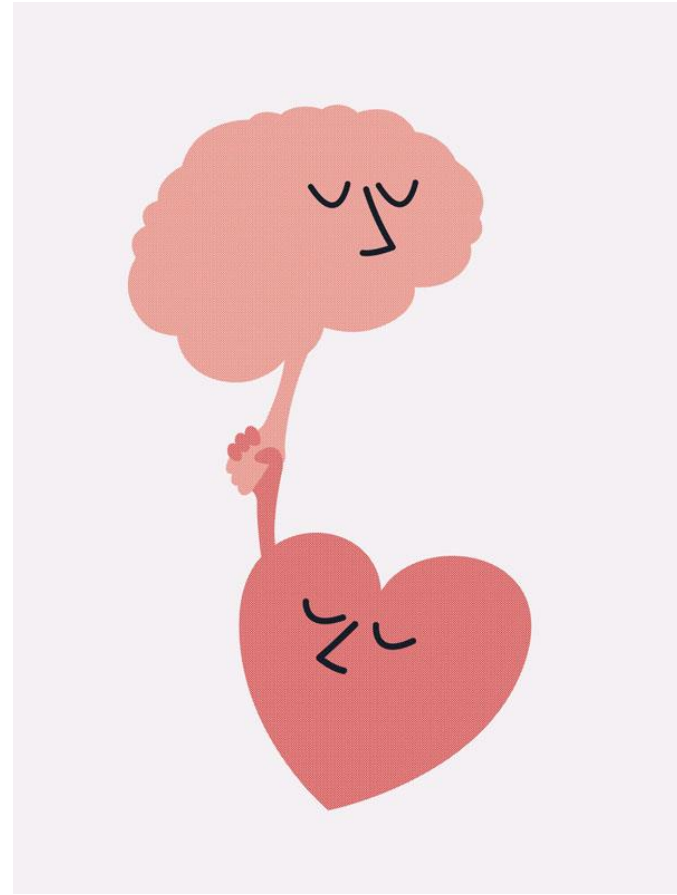


# Services for Specific Populations

- Eating Disorders Program
- Neuropsychiatric Special Care
- Medical Day Treatment



# ***Be Compassionate Towards Yourself and Others***





# Questions?

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