



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Coalition to Empower our Future

Re: CA Parents Call for a Comprehensive Approach to Solving the Youth Mental Health Crisis

Date: May 2025

In advance of Mental Health Awareness Month, the Coalition to Empower our Future conducted conversations with parents across California to discuss the state of youth mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, in partnership with Mercury Analytics, the coalition conducted an online survey among 600 parents in California from April 7 to 14, 2025.

This research finds that parents in California are worried about the state of youth mental health and wellbeing, agree there are many factors driving the issue, and are seeking a multifaceted approach that includes support and resources to help them support their kids.

Key Research Findings:

Youth mental health is seen as a deteriorating and pervasive challenge that is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Survey data shows that California parents are worried about youth mental health and wellbeing – the vast majority say the situation is bad and not improving. In the coalition’s conversations with parents across California, many express a similar sentiment, saying things that indicate the situation is “*getting a lot worse*.”

Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE STATE OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE U.S. TODAY?



Q: THINKING BACK TO 6 MONTHS AGO, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE U.S. HAS...



Q: THINKING AHEAD 6 MONTHS FROM NOW, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE U.S. WILL BE...



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

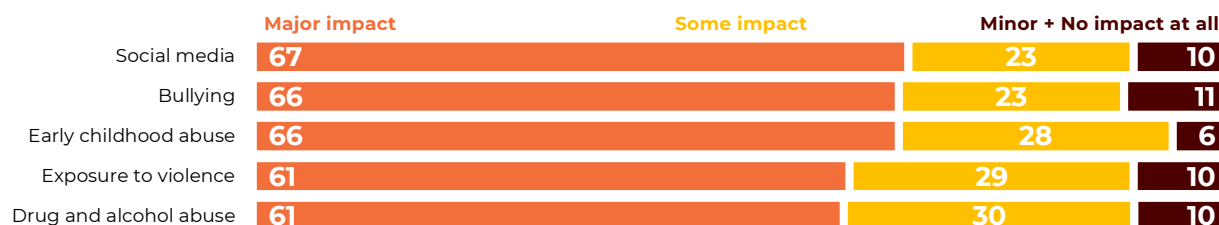
"I definitely think that mental health in youth is getting a lot worse." – CA Parent

"Mental health is worse. I work at a middle school, and I see a lot of these kids." – CA Parent

"I've been seeing a lot of issues with the youth and their mental health issues. It's all over the news and social media." – CA Parent

California parents think a broad range of factors is causing the decline in youth mental health. The vast majority of parents in California recognize that youth mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. In both survey research and in the coalition's conversations across the state, parents cite a broad array of drivers such as social media, bullying, early childhood abuse, exposure to violence, drugs and alcohol, etc.

Q: PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT YOU WOULD SAY EACH FACTOR HAS ON YOUTH IN THE U.S. RIGHT NOW.ⁱ



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

"There's more than one thing wrong with youth mental health." – CA Parent

"Kids are not getting the face-to-face interactions like you would when you're talking to someone in person or going to functions and seeing people." – CA Parent

"There are different emotional and social problems that kids are dealing with. And high school brings its own set of challenges, with social media becoming more accessible and all the comparisons games, and all the bullying." – CA Parent

"I deal with a lot of people in the behavioral aspect and a lot of them just need more attention to what's going on in their lives. And sometimes kids just need to go outside and go for a walk." – CA Parent

When it comes to tackling youth mental health, California parents are looking for a comprehensive approach. Parents say youth mental health and wellbeing is a complicated problem, requiring a multifaceted solution. Survey data shows that more than eight-in-ten parents in California support a comprehensive approach over a narrow approach targeting phones and similar devices. And in the coalition's conversations across the state, parents have expressed that a broad range of solutions and approaches is essential.

Q: WHEN IT COMES TO IMPROVING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST APPROACH?



CA Parents

QUOTES FROM PARENTS

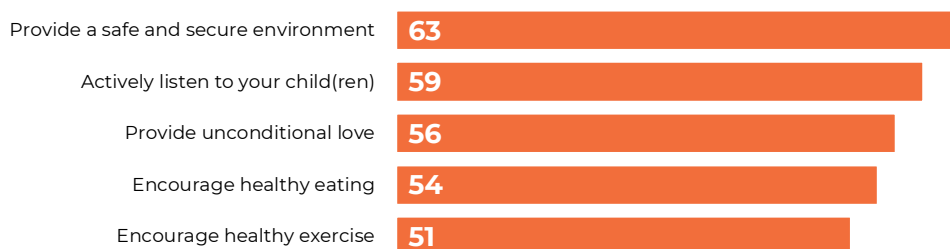
"It's hard to pinpoint just one thing. It would be better to approach [youth mental health] in a holistic way." – CA Parent

"If there was one solution, we would just do it and be done with it." – CA Parent

"We need to figure out some type of balance because technology is here to stay and there's a lot of ways it's helpful as well. We need a balanced approach." – CA Parent

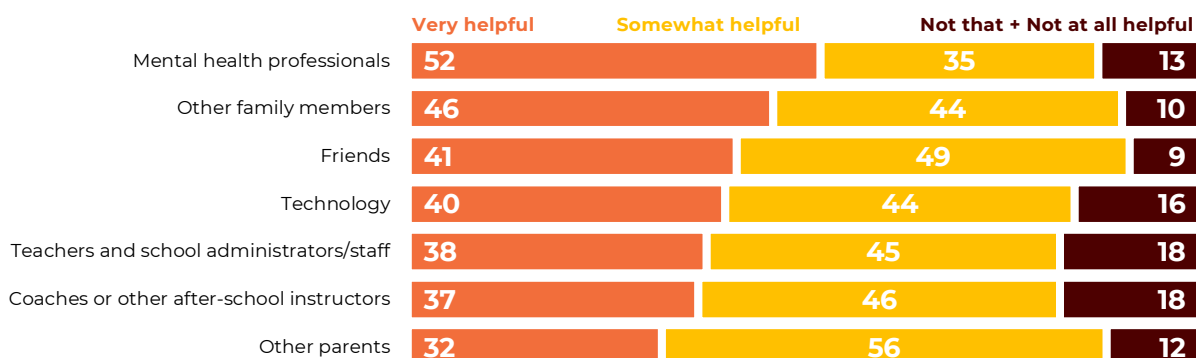
California parents feel extremely responsible for youth mental health, and they are trying to provide their kids with the support systems they need. Parents want to support their child or children's mental health. In the coalition's conversations across California, parents say they want to "be a safe space," "a coach," and "a cheerleader" for their kids. They say they also want to be "a good communicator" with their kids. These conversations are backed up by survey data that says many parents in California are actively trying to implement strategies to support their kids – for example, by providing stable and communicative environments.

Q: HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?



California parents rely on support from a broad range of resources and people. In both survey data and the coalition's conversations with parents across California, parents say they rely on their community to help them support their child or children's mental health. For example, parents in California are relying on mental health experts, family members, and friends.

Q: HOW HELPFUL IS THE SUPPORT FROM EACH RESOURCE?



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

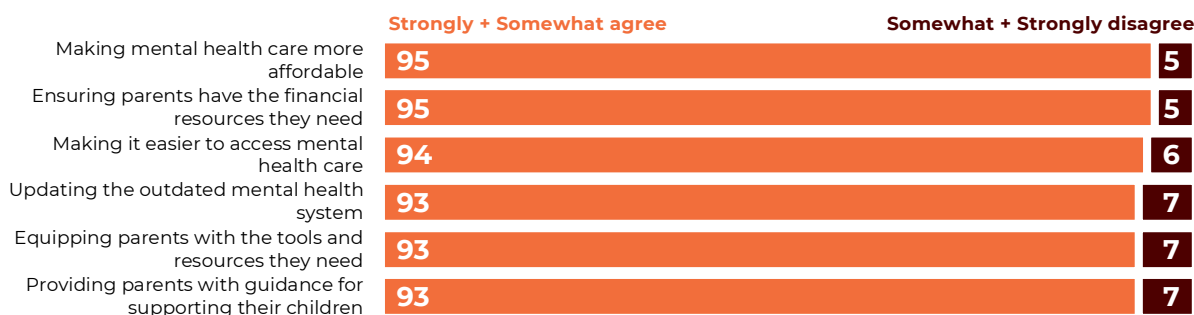
"[My kids] would turn to other family members they feel safe talking to, then maybe a counselor at school. Basically whoever they feel more comfortable with." – CA Parent

"We've built a pretty good collection of other families that we've become friends with, and my kids sometimes feel more comfortable talking to the parents of their friends." – CA Parent

"I would say my wife or grandparents [are trusted to support my kids]. They're young but they like their grandparents." – CA Parent

When it comes to protecting youth mental health and wellbeing, California parents are looking for support from their community. In the coalition's conversations across California, parents report they have trouble finding the right tools and resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of their kids. They say it's hard to know where to look, find credible expertise, access professional support, and know if they are doing the right thing. Survey data backs up the sentiment that parents need more support – for example, the data demonstrates that parents want youth mental health support to be more affordable and accessible.

Q: HERE IS A LIST OF STRATEGIES. PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE IF EACH WOULD HELP IMPROVE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.ⁱⁱ



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

"My high schooler really has no resources at her high school at all. Her student counselor is really wonderful but he's not a child psychologist." – CA Parent

"I feel like [resources] are there if you ask, but it's just not obvious to me. And you usually need a school counselor or coach to be that first level." – CA Parent

"The most common place to find resources is at a school but it really depends on the community that it's in. Some schools have more resources than others." – CA Parent

ⁱ Chart displays items that only rise to the top among nationwide parents.

ⁱⁱ Chart displays data from a selection of key strategies.