



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Coalition to Empower Our Future

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

Date: May 2025

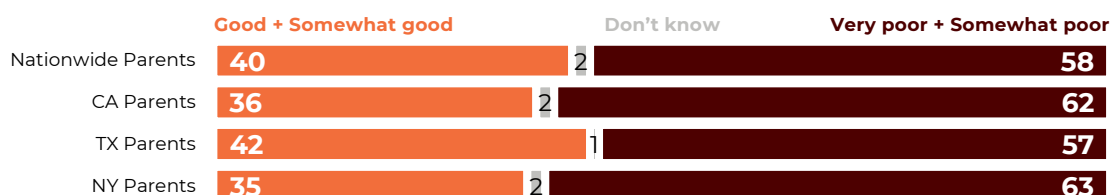
In advance of Mental Health Awareness Month, the Coalition to Empower Our Future conducted conversations with parents across the U.S. to discuss the state of youth mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, in partnership with Mercury Analytics, the coalition conducted an online survey among 2,320 parents (520 parents nationwide, 600 parents in California, 600 parents in Texas, and 600 parents in New York) from April 7 to 14, 2025.

This research finds that parents 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 parents are worried about youth mental health and wellbeing. The vast majority of parents say the situation is bad and not improving. In the coalition's conversations across the country, many parents express similar sentiment, saying the situation "*needs a lot of attention*" and that "*things are getting worse*."

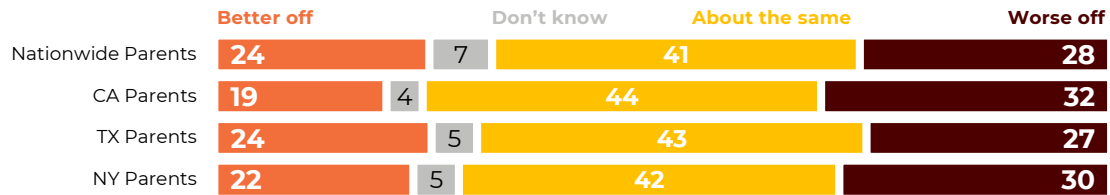
Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE STATE OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE U.S. TODAY?



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

"Overall, youth mental health really needs a lot of attention." – TX Parent

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

"I work with youth, so, I get to see the ins and outs of what they're dealing with, and they're so worried about their peers constantly. There's a lot of anxiety. They're always stressed." – TX Parent

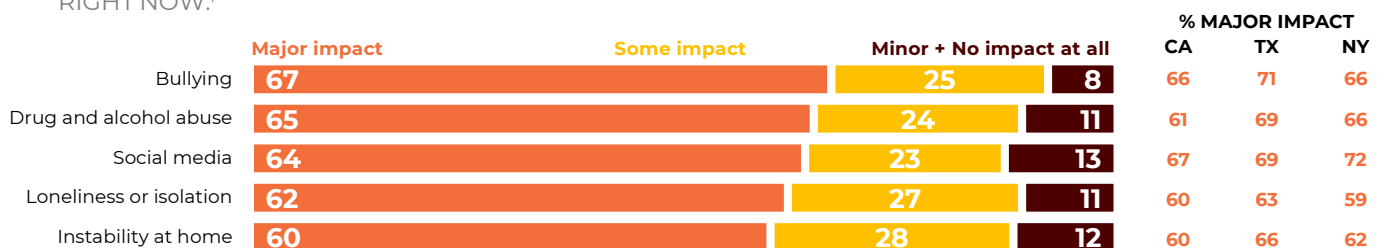
"[Youth mental health] is not too positive right now, because there's a lot of expectations." – NY Parent

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

"Things are getting worse. Mental health is leading to issues like anxiety, lower self-esteem in kids, and cyberbullying. All these things are affecting them in a negative way." – NY Parent

Parents think a broad range of factors is causing the decline in youth mental health. The vast majority of parents recognize that youth mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. In both survey research and in the coalition's conversations across the country, parents cite a broad array of drivers, for example, bullying, drug and alcohol abuse, social media, loneliness or isolation, instability at home, etc.

Q: PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT YOU WOULD SAY EACH FACTOR HAS ON YOUTH IN THE U.S. RIGHT NOW.¹



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

"It's a comprehensive problem." – NY Parent

"The reasoning behind [worsening youth mental health] is multifaceted. Kids have a lot more to worry about nowadays than a lot of us did. My kids and their friends have all experienced extreme anxiety, depression, and things like that." – TX Parent

"There's a number of factors that are playing in. Teenagers have become very aware of the world around them and they went through a pandemic where they were fully remote for 18 months, so they missed that launching period in their lives." – NY 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

"There's an immense amount of pressure that these kids face from school. Even my own children. For example, they have to be elite level dancers, and they're 10. I've heard it's the same for kids in other sports." – TX Parent

When it comes to tackling youth mental health, 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 nearly eight-in-ten parents support a comprehensive approach over a narrow approach targeting phones and similar devices. And in conversations, parents are focused on how essential a broad range of solutions and approaches are.

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



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

"It's not a one size fits all type of situation. There's a lot of issues, whether it be addiction to devices, bullying on social media, or problems such as ADHD and things like that." – NY Parent

"I generally think we need a comprehensive solution to address this problem. Everyone's situation is different. Somebody mentioned the school, but I think it also starts in the home and the community. It's a multiple-tiered approach." – NY Parent

"It starts at the home and what the family life is like. Also, it's who's home and how much attention the child gets and all that stuff. It's complicated." – NY Parent

"Even if you find a solution, it may work for a little while or for some children, but then if anxiety or a new issue crops up, then you may have to find a different solution. [The approach] has to stay pretty fluid." – TX Parent

"It's a lot of things, not just social media." – TX Parent

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 the country, parents say they want to "be a safe space," "a coach," "an advocate," "a cheerleader," and "a teacher" for their kids. They say they

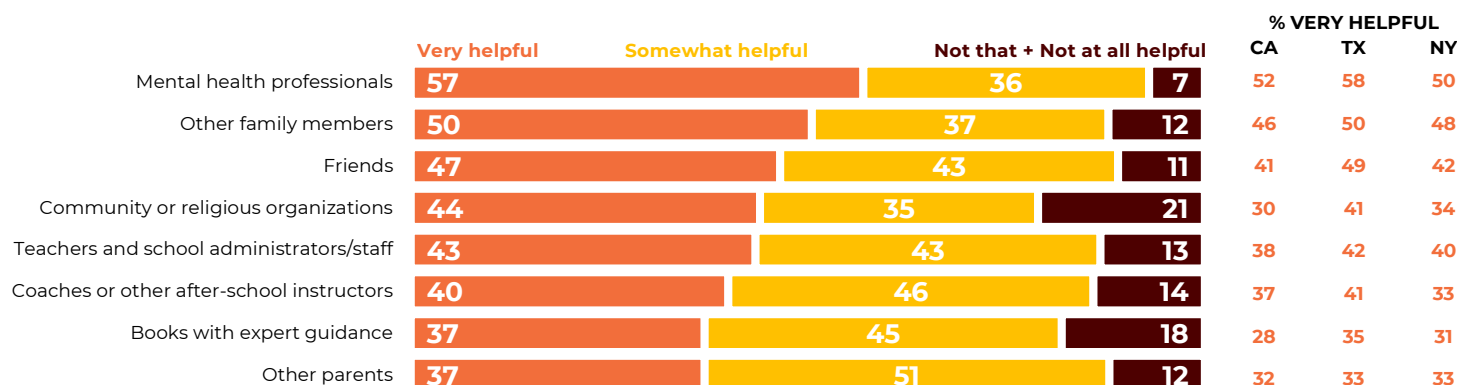
also want to be “good listeners” and “have really open communication” with their kids. These conversations are backed up by survey data that says many parents are actively trying to implement strategies to support their kids – for example, by providing stable and communicative environments.

Q: HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?¹



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

Q: HOW HELPFUL IS THE SUPPORT FROM EACH RESOURCE?¹



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

“I would start with my kid’s doctor then maybe a church pastor.” – TX Parent

“I lean on [my kids’] guidance counselors, their grandparents, aunts, and my husband.” – NY Parent

“My son looks up to my brother and really idolizes him. So, they’ll spend time together and he’ll help decode how my son is feeling outside of myself and my husband.” – NY Parent

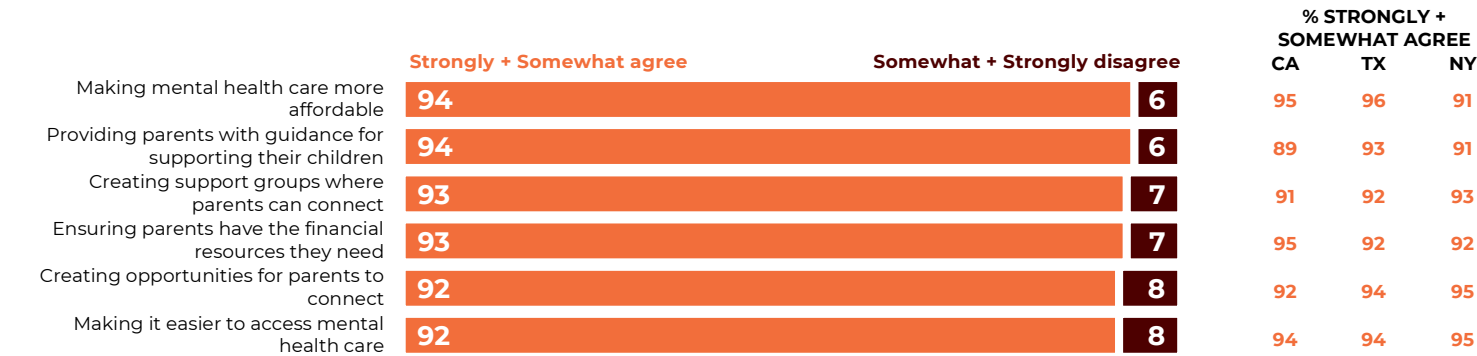
“[My kids] would turn to other family members they feel safe talking to, then maybe a counselor at school. Basically whoever they feel more comfortable with.” – CA Parent

“I trust my mom to teach them and their teachers. They’ve had great teachers before and now, so I trust them and think they’re a good example for my kids.” – TX 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

When it comes to protecting youth mental health and wellbeing, parents are looking for support from their community. When it comes to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their kids, in the coalition’s conversations across the country, parents report they have trouble finding the right tools and resources. 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.ⁱ



QUOTES FROM PARENTS

“The amount of resources that are out there are so expansive and ever-growing but it’s the quality of that resource, not the quantity of it. So, it’s trying to find the marriage of all of these resources together.” – NY Parent

“There are organizations and resources out there but it’s hard to find them and know where to look. Those programs are often stretched super thin. I remember calling a behavioral health center who had us on a waiting list but I never got a call back.” – TX Parent

“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’m frustrated that New York City doesn’t provide counseling services for kids in preschool. [My son] will have to wait another year to qualify and he would definitely benefit from therapy.” – NY 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

“With my daughter, I was calling around doctors’ offices and trying to research things on my own. The doctors had three to six month waiting lists so I was horrified that this is what we have to deal with to get help. It’s a huge problem.” – TX Parent

ⁱ Chart displays items that only rise to the top among nationwide parents.
ⁱⁱ Chart displays data from a selection of key strategies.