



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Coalition to Empower Our Future
Re: Eight-in-10 Illinois Voters & Parents Support a Comprehensive Approach to Youth Mental Health
Date: August 2025

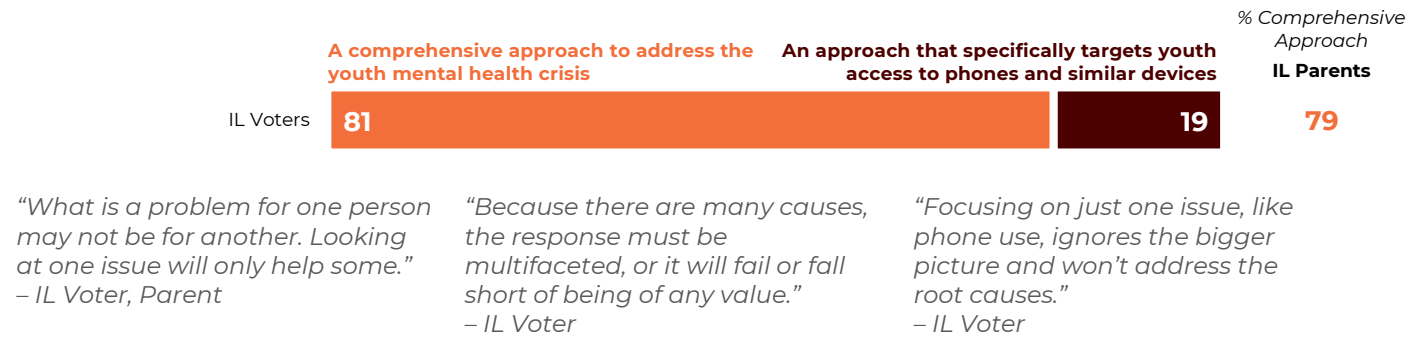
With kids heading back to school, the Coalition to Empower Our Future (CEF) conducted research among Illinois voters and parents to discuss youth mental health and wellbeing throughout the state. CEF, in partnership with Mercury Analytics, conducted an online survey among 600 registered voters in Illinois (341 of whom were parents) from June 24 to 29, 2025. In addition to the survey research, CEF hosted conversations with 30 Illinois voters and parents from August 5 to 8, 2025 (via an online discussion board).

This research builds on [previous research](#) conducted by CEF and finds that Illinois voters and parents are worried about the state of youth mental health and wellbeing, which they view as a complex and multifaceted problem. The vast majority are seeking a comprehensive solution that includes expanding resources, improving school environments, and empowering parents to support their children.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

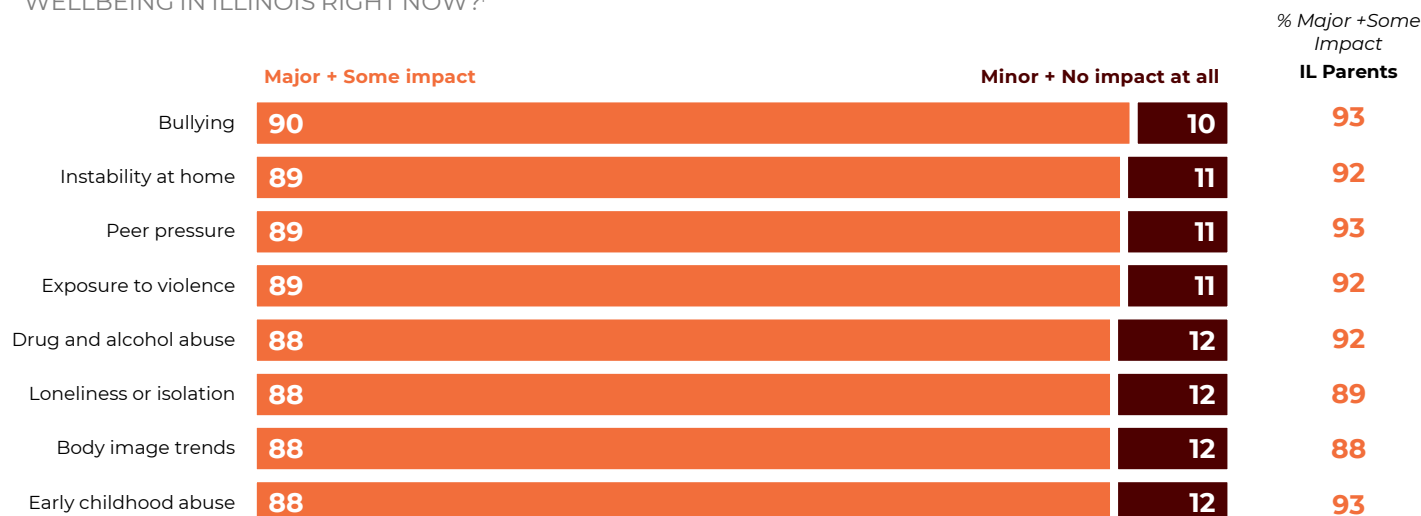
When it comes to tackling mental health issues among youth, Illinois voters and parents think a comprehensive approach is necessary. Voters and parents prefer a solution that is multifaceted enough to meet the complex issue of youth mental health. Survey data shows that about **eight-in-10 Illinois voters and parents support a comprehensive approach** over a narrow approach targeting phones and similar devices.

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



Illinois voters and parents think a broad range of factors is causing the decline in youth mental health. The vast majority of voters and parents in Illinois recognize that youth mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. In both survey research and in CEF’s conversations across the state, both voters and parents cite a broad array of drivers of declining youth mental health, including bullying, instability at home, peer pressure, exposure to violence, drug and alcohol abuse, loneliness or isolation, body image trends, early childhood abuse, and more.

Q: HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT WOULD YOU SAY EACH FACTOR HAS ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN ILLINOIS RIGHT NOW?ⁱ



Youth mental health is seen as a deteriorating and pervasive challenge that is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Survey data shows that Illinois voters and parents are worried about youth mental health and wellbeing – the vast majority say the situation is bad and has only gotten worse since they were a child. Few say youth mental health and wellbeing are likely to improve in the near future.

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



Q: THINKING BACK TO WHEN YOU PERSONALLY WERE A KID, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN ILLINOIS HAS...



Q: THINKING AHEAD SIX MONTHS FROM NOW, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN ILLINOIS WILL BE...



"Not much progress is being made to improve the quality of mental health care in Illinois."
– IL Voter

"Not much has been done to help teens struggling with mental health."
– IL Voter, Parent

"Things are becoming more challenging, but we aren't improving the availability of resources for our youth."
– IL Voter, Parent

Most Illinois voters and parents personally know young people who are struggling with their mental health, and most don't know where to turn to support them. For example:

- About **seven-in-10** IL voters and parents personally **know kids who are struggling** with mental health.

- About **six-in-10** IL voters and parents **would not know where to go** in their community to access mental health support for a young person in crisis.
- Over **six-in-10** IL voters and parents **say lack of access to mental health resources for youth** is a widespread issue in their community.

"It's concerning to not know where to go because some parents aren't as motivated to get help for their children if it isn't easy to access."
– IL Voter, Parent

"I only know where to get support because I'm an educator. If I didn't have the training, I wouldn't know where to go."
– IL Voter, Parent

"In our experience with our own son, we only found help after a lot of asking around. Help needs to be found. It will not find you."
– IL Voter, Parent

Illinois voters and parents recognize how unique each young person's situation is, and they say that acknowledging differences could help improve youth mental health and wellbeing. The vast majority of Illinois voters and parents agree that every young person's mental health experience looks different, and recognizing that and the complexity of youth mental health is part of the solution.

Q: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE WITH MOST?



Q: PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

ACKNOWLEDGING HOW EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LOOKS DIFFERENT COULD HELP IMPROVE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.



"Even if the cause of different mental health challenges is similar, each person's experience is different, and each person experiences the world differently."
– IL Voter

"Everyone wants to feel seen and heard. Acknowledging this can make the youth feel more understood and accepted."
– IL Voter

"Acknowledging that each young person's experience is unique can dramatically improve and support their mental health."
– IL Voter, Parent

Illinois voters and parents want to prioritize solutions that create more supportive environments and make resources more accessible. For example, a very strong majority (**more than nine-in-10** Illinois voters and parents) say we could improve youth mental health across the state by making it easier for young people to access mental health care, by creating school environments where youth feel safe and supported, and by equipping parents with the tools and resources they need.

"Making mental health services more accessible can only help. It may reach a child who would have never had access otherwise."
– IL Voter

"I think creating easier access to resources for youths in crisis and ensuring they can reach out will help lower the suicidal rates."
– IL Voter, Parent

"Everyone is entitled to a safe environment. That would be the bare minimum."
– IL Voter, Parent

¹ Chart displays items that only rise to the top among Illinois voters.

Additional Methodology Notes

Mercury Analytics, on behalf of the Coalition to Empower our Future, conducted a survey between June 24 and June 29, 2025. A sample of 600 registered voters in Illinois were interviewed online (341 of whom were also parents). The margin of error among this audience at the 95% confidence interval level is +/- 4.0%.

The Coalition to Empower our Future also conducted an online discussion board with 30 voters in Illinois between August 5 to 8, 2025. 15 of the participants were also parents.