



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Coalition to Empower Our Future
Re: Eight-in-10 Virginia 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 Virginia 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 Virginia (342 of whom were parents) from June 24 to 29, 2025. In addition to the survey research, CEF hosted conversations with 30 Virginia 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 Virginia 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, Virginia 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 **eight-in-10 Virginia 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?



Virginia 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 Virginia recognize that youth mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. In both survey research and in CEF's conversations across the state, voters and parents cite a broad array of drivers of declining youth mental health, including early childhood abuse, instability at home, social media, bullying, drug and alcohol abuse, and more.

Q: HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT WOULD YOU SAY EACH FACTOR HAS ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN VIRGINIA RIGHT NOW?¹



Youth mental health is seen as a deteriorating and pervasive challenge that is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Survey data shows that Virginia 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 VIRGINIA TODAY?



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



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



"The state of our youth's mental health is poor in Virginia. I strongly believe they don't have enough help."
– VA Voter, Parent

"Having had teenagers during the pandemic, I have seen a decline in youth mental health."
– VA Voter, Parent

"School-aged children are often filled with dread as opposed to being able to just be children."
– VA Voter, Parent

Most Virginia 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:

- More than **seven-in-10** VA voters and parents personally **know kids who are struggling** with mental health.
- More than **six-in-10** VA voters and parents **would not know where to go** in their community to access mental health support for a young person in crisis.
- About **seven-in-10** VA voters and parents **say their community does not have enough resources** to support youth mental health.

"There are not enough resources or providers, especially ones who work well with the youth."
– VA Voter, Parent

"It's hard for young people in my community to access mental health resources, because no one knows where to go and who to talk to."
– VA Voter

"It's concerning to not know where to go, because it could drastically improve the mental health of the youth community if we knew more about these resources."
– VA Voter

Virginia 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 Virginia 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.



"When we recognize differences, we can personalize care and avoid one-size-fits-all solutions that might miss the mark."
– VA Voter

"Empathy and an understanding of where people are coming from is the first step to creating a path forward. Customization is key."
– VA Voter

"If each kid is listened to and their perspective is understood, then they feel like they are cared for and loved."
– VA Voter, Parent

Virginia 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 Virginia 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, by training teachers and staff at K-12 schools to recognize early warning signs of emotional challenges, and by equipping parents with the tools and resources they need.

"Every school should make it easier for a child to get mental health help, because sometimes the school might be their only place to get help."
– VA Voter, Parent

"If we give parents and teachers the tools necessary to recognize symptoms, we will be better able to address the problems at hand."
– VA Voter, Parent

"Kids spend so much of their day in school that teachers being able to spot warning signs of depression or emotional challenges would be very helpful."
– VA Voter

¹ Chart displays items that only rise to the top among Virginia 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 Virginia were interviewed online (342 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 Virginia between August 5 to 8, 2025. 15 of the participants were also parents.