

The Strengthening Supports for Youth Act and the Prevention Services for Youth Act

Across the country, experts are raising alarm bells as the United States combats a worsening youth mental health and substance use crisis. In 2021 leading medical associations declared a [National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#). And in the same year, the United States Surgeon General issued a [Youth Mental Health Advisory](#).

Nearly [50 percent](#) of adolescents have had a mental health disorder at some point in their lives. Roughly [42 percent](#) of high school students have reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and more than [20 percent](#) have seriously considered suicide. Without access to treatment or prevention services, youth with mental health challenges are at an [increased risk](#) of contact with the criminal justice system and suicide. In spite of this, many youth in need of treatment [do not receive](#) the supports and services that they need.

Parents and family members are often the first to notice if a child is experiencing issues with emotions or behavior. Research has underscored the positive impact that meaningful family engagement and peer support can have on youth mental health and substance use outcomes. The use of these interventions can help bridge gaps in access, and provide a more robust landscape of supports and services for child, adolescents, and young adults.

The Strengthening Supports for Youth Act and Prevention Services for Youth Act aim to combat mental health and substance use challenges among children, adolescents, and young adults; and support opportunities to expand youth-focused prevention services.

The Strengthening Supports for Youth Act would:

- Establish a pilot program and provide grant funding to support parents, families, and caregivers in addressing mental health and substance use challenges among the children, adolescents, and young adults in their lives.
- Direct the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study and report on youth peer support services, and examine factors including:
 - The effectiveness of evidence-based youth peer support services;
 - Whether available youth peer support services meet the demand for such services;
 - The populations, including underserved populations, served through youth peer support services;
 - Challenges associated with implementing youth peer support services; and
 - Federal and state efforts to support the operation and implementation of youth peer support services.

The Prevention Services for Youth Act would:

- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to issue guidance to states on establishing an effective continuum of mental health and substance use disorder prevention services for youth, under the Medicaid program and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), that:
 - Outlines how states may finance youth mental health and substance use disorder prevention services;
 - Identifies how states may support access to youth mental health and substance use disorder services prevention services;
 - Describes best practices for coordinating Medicaid and CHIP funding for youth mental health and substance use disorder prevention services with other health insurance payors; and
 - Identifies best practices for measuring the effectiveness of community-based youth mental health and substance use disorder services.

Endorsements:

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Mental Health America, The Children's Partnership, Young Invincibles, American Psychological Association, SBCS (formerly South Bay Community Services), Active Minds, San Ysidro Health, Disability Rights California, Mending Matters, The Trevor Project, Lifeline Community Services, Inseparable, Born This Way, The National Collaborative for Transformative Youth Policy, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, California Children's Trust