

CRISIS IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

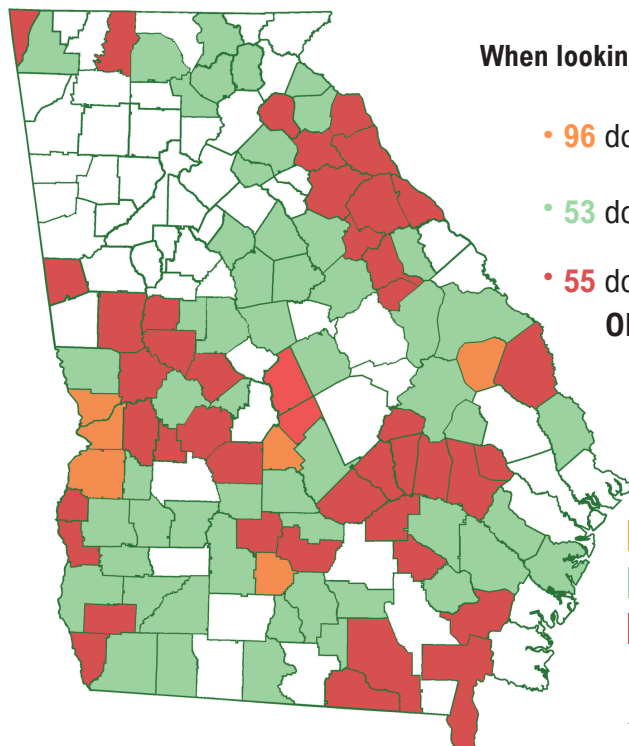
Children diagnosed with ADHD, autism, or developmental delays are twice as likely to experience chronic absenteeism as their peers without these conditions.¹ Undiagnosed, untreated, or inadequately treated conditions can lead to poor immediate and long-term outcomes, including significant impacts on a child's education.

THE YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE IN GEORGIA

Georgia Kids in Crisis

- In Georgia, **suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death** among youth ages 10-17.²
- **57%** of children ages 3-17 struggle to, or are not able to, access needed mental health treatment or counseling.³
- **70% of youth** in Department of Juvenile Justice secure facilities have a diagnosed disruptive, impulse-control, or conduct disorder.⁴

Accessing Behavioral Health Services in Georgia



When looking at Georgia's counties:

- **96** do not have a licensed psychiatrist
- **53** do not have a licensed social worker
- **55** do not have a licensed psychiatrist
OR a licensed social worker

- Counties without a licensed psychiatrist⁵
- Counties without a licensed social worker^{6*}
- Counties without a licensed psychiatrist⁷
OR licensed social worker

*The most recent available data for this indicator is from 2019. No updated dataset has been released as of the publication date.

SCAN BELOW TO SEE
FACTSHEET CITATIONS



THE ROLE SCHOOLS PLAY IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Schools often serve as the primary point of access to behavioral health services and supports.

	What We Have:	What We Need:	Georgia Law
 School Counselors	1:374 students ⁸	1:250 students ⁹	1:450 students ¹⁰
 School Social Workers	1:1,911 students ¹¹	1:250 students ¹²	No requirement
 School Psychologists	1:2,150 students ¹³	1:500 students ¹⁴	No requirement
 School Nurses	1:1,041 students ¹⁵	1:750 students* ¹⁶	No requirement

**Note: The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends school nurse-to-student ratios as a guideline, but simple ratios alone do not capture the full scope of nursing services needed to meet student health needs. Evidence supports using an updated, evidence-informed workload analysis to determine safe and effective staffing.* ¹⁷

WHY WE NEED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Untreated behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents can lead to: ¹⁸

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Low educational attainment
- Violence or risky behavior
- Lower rates of employment in adulthood
- Poor physical health (immediate and long-term)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Sustain and expand support for the Georgia Apex Program to continue advances in school-based mental health.
- ✓ Ensure full implementation of the Behavioral Health Care Workforce Database and develop strategies to address identified provider shortages and diversify the workforce.
- ✓ Allocate more funding to strengthen crisis support and intervention services, including continued implementation of 988 and mobile crisis services for children and adolescents.
- ✓ Strengthen and equitably implement HB 268 by establishing minimum behavioral health credentials for school mental health roles, ensuring all mandated trainings are evidence-based and trauma-informed, prioritizing resources for high-need districts, protecting student privacy, and requiring transparent reporting on outcomes.
- ✓ Regularly collect, update, and publicly share behavioral health workforce data.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We need to fully implement Georgia's comprehensive three-year [System of Care State Plan](#) ^{**} for child and adolescent health and support the work of Behavioral Health Innovation and Reform Commission to develop policy which can improve children's behavioral health outcomes.

^{**}Read Georgia's System of Care State Plan at:
<https://tinyurl.com/MindworksSP2024-2026>



REFERENCES FOR CRISIS IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- 1 National Health Statistics Report. "Chronic school absenteeism among children with selected developmental disabilities: National health interview survey, 2014–2016," 2018. Accessed November 13, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr118.pdf>.
- 2 Georgia Department of Public Health. Online Analytical Statistical Information System, Mortality Web Query, 2024 Deaths - All Causes, age 0-17. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/webquery/qryMortality.aspx>.
- 3 Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2023 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=11525&r=1>.
- 4 Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. FY2024 Annual Report. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://djj.georgia.gov/document/document/2024-djj-factbook/download>.
- 5 Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce. (2025). 2024 Counties without Primary Care Practitioners Report. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://healthcareworkforce.georgia.gov/document/document/2024-counties-without-primary-care-core-practionerspdf/download>.
- 6 "Behavioral Health Services in Georgia," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019. Accessed November 1, 2022 from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/stateprofiles-providers/georgia/index.html#table>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Georgia Department of Education. (FY24). Student Support Services Dashboard (Counselor). Georgia Insights. <https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/dashboards/student-support-services/>.
- 9 American School Counselor Association. (2025). "School counselor roles & ratios." Retrieved October 20, 2025 from <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>.
- 10 Georgia Secretary of State. Georgia Administrative Code: Rule 160-4-8-.05 School Counseling. Retrieved October 20, 2025 from <https://rules.sos.state.ga.us/gac/160-4-8>.
- 11 Georgia Department of Education. (FY24). Student Support Services Dashboard (School Social Workers). Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/Dashboards/Pages/Student-Support-Services.aspx>.
- 12 National Association of Social Workers. NASW Standards for School Social Work Services. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/NASW-Standards-for-School-Social-Work-Services>.
- 13 National Association of School Psychologists. Student to School Psychologist Ratio. 2023-2024. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>.
- 14 Georgia Department of Education. (FY24). Student Support Services Dashboard (School Psychologist). Georgia Insights. Retrieved October 20, 2025 from <https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/dashboards/student-support-services/>.
- 15 Georgia Department of Education. (FY24). Student Support Services Dashboard (School Nurse). Georgia Insights. Retrieved October 20, 2025. <https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/dashboards/student-support-services/>.
- 16 National Association of School Nurses. (2010). "School nurse workload: Staffing for safe care". NASN School Nurse, 25(1), 45–47. Retrieved October 20, 2025 from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942602X10391969>.
- 17 National Association of School Nurses. Position Statement: School Nurse Workload - Essential Staffing for Safe and Equitable Student Care, 2025. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://doi.org/10.1177/10598405251360761>.
- 18 National Alliance on Mental Illness. Mental Health By the Numbers. Retrieved August 25, 2025 from <https://www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/mental-health-by-the-numbers/>.