

# CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS of West Virginia's Students

“ In West Virginia—a ruggedly independent state with an independent spirit—mental health woes are fueled by social problems and a shortage of providers.

Despite the adopted slogan, “Almost Heaven,” many West Virginians are not in a great state of mind. West Virginia has one of the nation’s highest rates of deaths of despair: fatalities attributed to suicide, drug overdoses, and alcohol-related disease.”

—Joseph Williams, U.S. News and World Report<sup>1</sup>



## THE PROBLEMS

### KIDS IN CRISIS

Do you know that in West Virginia:



**21,000** children have major depression & 13,000 of those children do not receive treatment (2018)<sup>2</sup>



Suicide is the **2nd leading cause** of preventable deaths for teens (ages 10–17; 2019)<sup>3</sup>



**29%** of 4th graders are chronically absent (2019)<sup>4</sup>



**10%** of children do not live with either parent (2019)<sup>5</sup>



**5–3%** of babies born are exposed to drugs (2017)<sup>6</sup>

### DIRE SHORTAGES<sup>2,7</sup>

West Virginia has:



**1** school psychologist for every 1,881 students (recommended ratio is 1:500)



**1** school counselor for every 366 students (recommended ratio is 1:250)



**1** school social worker for every 15,433 students (recommended ratio is 1:250)

### Causes of Mental Health Provider Shortage

- » Opioid crisis
- » Lack of funding
- » Aging professionals
- » Growing demand
- » Low salaries
- » Low reimbursement rates



“ Every kid is **ONE CARING ADULT** away from being a success story.”

—Josh Shipp, Author<sup>8</sup>

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



**Implement** evidence-based practices, such as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)



**Address** mental health provider shortage



**Support** tiered school-based prevention & crisis response intervention



**Streamline** career pathways for mental health providers



**Align** funding & infrastructure, especially in rural areas

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, J.P. (2021, Sept. 1). *Almost Heaven, but not for Mental Health*. U.S. News & World Report. Retrieved April 19, 2022 from <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-09-01/west-virginia-almost-heaven-but-not-for-mental-health>

<sup>2</sup> Hopeful Futures Campaign. (2022, April 18). *West Virginia: Hopeful Futures Campaign*. Retrieved April 18, 2022 from <https://hopefulfutures.us/action-west-virginia/>

<sup>3</sup> McJunkin, J. (2018, January 18). *Among WV Teens, Suicide Is 2nd Top Cause of Death, Usually by Firearm*. Charleston Gazette-Mail. Retrieved November 16, 2021 from [https://www.wvgazette.com/opinion/op\\_ed\\_commentaries/jim-mcjunkin-among-wv-teens-suicide-is-nd-top-cause/article\\_c820c7db-2c05-5d63-8714-ced42a672cee.html](https://www.wvgazette.com/opinion/op_ed_commentaries/jim-mcjunkin-among-wv-teens-suicide-is-nd-top-cause/article_c820c7db-2c05-5d63-8714-ced42a672cee.html)

<sup>4</sup> Kid Count Data Center. (2019a). *Fourth Graders Who Are Chronically Absent From School in West Virginia* [Data set]. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved November 16, 2021 from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8816-fourth-graders-who-are-chronically-absent-from-school?loc=50&loct=2#detailed/2/50/false/1729,871,573,36,867,38,18,16,14/any/17670>

<sup>5</sup> Kid Count Data Center. (2019b). *Children Living With Neither Parent in West Virginia* [Data set]. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved November 16, 2021 from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/111-children-living-with-neither-parent?loc=50&loct=2#detailed/2/50/false/1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/439,440>

<sup>6</sup> West Virginia Bureau for Medical Services. Behavioral Health and Long-Term Care Services Unit. (2022, March 3). Personal communication with Cynthia Parsons, Program Director.

<sup>7</sup> Reinert, M., Nguyen, T., and Fritze, D. (2020). *2021: The State of Mental Health in America*. Retrieved April 18, 2022 from [https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2021%20State%20of%20Mental%20Health%20in%20America\\_o.pdf](https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2021%20State%20of%20Mental%20Health%20in%20America_o.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Shipp, J. (n.d.). *The Power of One Caring Adult*. Retrieved November 16, 2021 from <https://joshshipp.com/one-caring-adult/>

