



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **Children's Mental Health Awareness Day**

- 1 of 5 children has a mental health issue
- Between 60-90% of children in need of mental health treatment do not receive services
- The youth suicide rate in Wisconsin is consistently higher than the national average

Wisconsin children deserve safe and strong communities that support healthy development and resilience. When children experience mental health challenges, they deserve effective treatment so they can be happier and healthier, succeed in school and thrive as adults. On this Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, WAFCA offers the following steps for improving children's mental health treatment in Wisconsin.

1. *Children's Mental Health Standard of Care.* Agree on what we want for children then support laws, policy, and funding to achieve that level of care statewide.
2. *Access to Mental Health Treatment.* Make therapy accessible by: reducing wait times to get into therapy, making it easier to navigate mental health systems, increasing mental health screening, and reducing licensing and certification barriers to establishing more community-based treatment (e.g., increase school-based therapy to reduce travel time and transportation barriers and reduce Medicaid prior-authorization paperwork).
3. *Mental Health Professionals.* Address the shortage of mental health professionals by increasing support for therapists' training, increasing payment for therapists (both Medicaid and private insurance rates) and increase support for telehealth in order to access psychiatrists.
4. *Families & Communities.* Strengthen families through increased parenting support, peer mentors, respite, and funding of treatment for parents' depression, anxiety and addictions.
5. *Trauma-Informed & Responsive Care.* Increase programmatic and fiscal support for trauma-informed care and treatment options that respect children's experience and engage them in treatment.

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*WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin.*

*Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 300,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.*