
MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS in FORMED FAMILIES

Virginia families formed by foster care, adoption and kinship care are much more likely than other families to need mental health care and supports.



The children and youth we care for are 3 to 4 times more likely to have behavioral and emotional disorders than children raised by birth families.

In addition, because of their mental health needs, our children and youth are at increased risk of facing inappropriate educational placements, inadequate specialized services and poor long-term outcomes.

- Students in foster care experience significant challenges with the lack of stability in their lives. Many have serious academic needs including learning gaps, poor attendance and serious emotional and behavioral problems. These problems faced by youth in foster care often go unnoticed, unassessed and unserved (Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2010)
- Children who were involved with child protective services who were in out of home care are disproportionately more likely to be identified with an “emotional disorder” classification in school than students for whom there were no substantiated reports of maltreatment (Smithgall et al, 2004).
- The rate of school discipline incidents is higher for students in out-of-home care than for students with no substantiated maltreatment, and students with ED classifications had the highest rates of disciplinary incidents (Smithgall et al, 2005).
- US adolescents who had been adopted in infancy are more likely than nonadoptees to have teacher, parent, and child-reported mental health problems, particularly externalizing problems. Adoptees were more than twice as likely to have had contact with a mental health professional than nonadoptees (Keyes et al, 2008)
- 26% of adoptive parents report their adopted children age 6 and older were ever diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (vs. 10% in birth families). (National Survey Adopted Parents, HHS, 2007)
- 38% of parents who adopted from domestic foster care report their children age 6 and up were ever diagnosed with ADHD (National Survey Adopted Parents, HHS, 2007)