

# Addressing the mental health crisis for Wisconsin kids

*Halfway mark on five-year,  
\$150 million investment in mental  
and behavioral health initiatives*

**JULY 2022**



Kids deserve the best.

In 2019, Children's Wisconsin identified and announced seven initiatives to address the mental health needs of Wisconsin kids, initiatives that would require an investment of \$150 million over five years.

In the months before that announcement, we sat down with more than 150 stakeholders from our organization and community. Those conversations were eye-opening. More than 90,000 kids across our health system received mental and behavioral health services in 2016, but these services were split between 21 different teams with limited alignment. Community members often did not know how to access these services, much less view our organization as a leader in caring for kids' mental and behavioral health needs.

It was clear to me that Children's was able to not only better integrate our services, but to leverage our strength and resources to focus on early detection, improve access and raise awareness of the scope of the issues facing our kids.

I am immensely proud of the progress we have made in the last two and a half years. We have already invested \$65.5 million in mental and behavioral health services and are on track to surpass the \$150 million vision we originally articulated. \$52 million has come from generous donors, including the two largest single family donations we have ever received — \$15 million from the Reiman Foundation and \$20 million from The Yabuki Family Foundation. This support has allowed us to restructure the leadership and organization of our mental health services, create new services and programs, and launch an awareness and education campaign.

But what has impressed me most along this journey is that everywhere I look, people are eagerly joining the effort. Donors have given generously because they've felt the impact in their own families. Our staff has risen to the challenge of providing care in new and innovative ways. And most of all, Wisconsin kids are showing courageous leadership in being advocates for themselves and their peers. They are changing the narrative around mental and behavioral health and normalizing these issues to make it easier for others to get the help they need.

This work will take time and sustained commitment beyond the initiatives we announced in 2019, but we've made tremendous strides and have plans in place to help us realize a brighter future for our kids. With the support of our community, Children's Wisconsin is on a path to create a comprehensive and groundbreaking model that puts kids' mental health on the same plane as their physical health.



**Peggy Troy**  
President and CEO  
Children's Wisconsin



As a pediatrician, I have dedicated my career to caring for and supporting kids and families. My training and early years as a doctor were focused on their physical health, but over the past decade, it became increasingly clear that the mental health needs of our kids were not being met. As I talked with our pediatricians, I continually heard that they were not equipped to support these kids themselves and they did not have access to the experts and services they needed.

I am proud to be part of a large team at Children's Wisconsin that is dedicated to addressing these needs. That team's new leadership structure includes a Vice President of Mental Health, Amy Herbst, and an Executive Director of Mental Health, Julie Swiderski, as well as four directors. With the support and dedication of hundreds on their teams who work directly with families and behind the scenes, we have made meaningful operational progress.

But none of this work would be possible without the courageous kids you'll read about in this report and so many others like them. They are leading this effort by speaking up about their mental health and saying, "It's okay to not be okay."

One of the best examples that I won't soon forget is 9-year-old, Austin. When the CBS News program "60 Minutes" featured our efforts in May 2022, he shared his experience with depression. Austin said, "The world needs to know. Mental health needs to be treated or bad stuff could happen." Austin's courage left a lasting impact on every person who watched.

We want kids like Austin to know that Children's Wisconsin hears you. This work is just beginning, but we are committed to making mental health a priority for every child within our reach.



**Smriti Khare, MD**  
Chief Mental and Behavioral Health Officer  
Children's Wisconsin

## SOUNDING THE ALARM ON MENTAL HEALTH AND RESPONDING TO COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

Significant progress has been made in the two and half years since Children’s Wisconsin identified our original seven initiatives. Our work has positioned us as a national leader, which includes playing a key role in supporting advocacy efforts for a national response. This led to the campaign to “Sound the Alarm” on pediatric mental health in October of 2021. The campaign is spearheaded by the Children’s Hospital Association, American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists. We were thrilled to see 68 partner organizations and 76 hospitals across the country sign on to support the campaign and for U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy to issue a national Advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation’s youth mental health crisis.

Our leadership in the “Sound the Alarm” campaign and robust COVID-19 vaccine work led to a visit by Murthy, who came to Children’s Wisconsin with First Lady Jill Biden in December 2021 following the Waukesha parade tragedy. The First Lady and Surgeon General learned not only about how Children’s tended to the significant physical injuries of parade victims, but also how social workers helped to reunite families at the hospital and hospital-based psychologists provided counseling to injured children. We discussed our creation of a mental health support line to address the trauma of the greater community. The support line was staffed by Children’s mental health experts to provide guidance for families on how to discuss the tragedy with their children and connect them to additional resources, if needed.

Members of our Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team helped the broader community process the trauma of the parade tragedy as well. The team is comprised of trained Children’s staff who conduct interventions to help Children’s employees and communities cope with traumatic incidents. Just weeks later, that team was also called to St. Augustine Prep Academy in Milwaukee. A chemical exposure at the school pool sent 21 students to Children’s for treatment. In 2021, the CISM team performed more than twice as many internal Children’s and external community group interventions as the year prior.



Former Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, First Lady Jill Biden, Children’s Wisconsin President and CEO Peggy Troy and Chief Nursing Officer Nancy Korom

## SEVEN MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

At the start of Children’s Wisconsin’s five-year mental and behavioral health commitment, seven key initiatives were identified to help address the growing mental and behavioral health crisis facing Wisconsin kids. These initiatives are designed to detect mental and behavioral health needs sooner, improve access to services, and reduce the stigma around the illness.

On the following pages, we provide updates on each of these initiatives at the midpoint of the five-year plan. We also share our work on community awareness and reducing stigma through our Shine Through awareness campaign and are pleased to provide a fundraising update. All information reflects progress through June 2022.

- 1 **Integrated mental and behavioral health**
- 2 **Universal screening for mental health**
- 3 **Early childhood mental health**
- 4 **School-based mental and behavioral health**
- 5 **Therapist Fellowship Program**
- 6 **Urgent and emergent mental health**
- 7 **Partnerships with inpatient and residential care centers**

### BY THE NUMBERS: RESPONSE TO WAUKESHA PARADE TRAGEDY

90

calls made to our mental health support line

17

people referred for ongoing therapy

9

CISM group interventions held for Children’s staff plus numerous one-on-one interventions

250

Waukesha School District staff and community members who participated in CISM group interventions

# 1 INTEGRATED MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

*Integrating care so there is no “wrong door”*

Children’s Wisconsin has embarked on one of the largest-scale implementations of integrated mental and behavioral health (IMBH) in any pediatric setting in the country. We are transforming the way we practice to offer mental and behavioral health services at every touch point — wherever kids and families are. In this way, we care for the needs of the largest number of kids possible.

This new model was created thanks to a \$20 million gift from The Yabuki Family Foundation in 2021. It is the largest single gift in Children’s Wisconsin history. The funding helped us launch the effort to put licensed therapists in every one of our primary and urgent care locations.

The model creates a new standard for evaluation, treatment and access to mental health services for children. A child’s primary care team, which now includes licensed therapists serving as behavioral health consultants, collaborates to address concerns such as anxiety, depression, trauma and suicidal ideation, as well as attention difficulties, sleep challenges and disruptive behaviors.

Less than a year after the Yabuki family’s gift was announced, these therapists have already provided mental health support to more than 9,000 Wisconsin children. When fully staffed by the end of 2023, the program has the potential to benefit more than a third of the pediatric population in southeastern Wisconsin.

The Yabuki Family Foundation was established by Jeff Yabuki, who served as CEO of Wisconsin-based Fiserv from 2005 to 2020. Jeff’s younger brother, Craig, had depression that went undiagnosed during childhood. In 2017, Craig died by suicide, leaving behind a wife and three young children.

“Out of tragedy comes opportunity. We are honored to pay tribute to my brother by partnering with Children’s Wisconsin to create meaningful change for kids in Wisconsin and across the nation,” said Jeff.



Jeff Yabuki (right) with his brother, Craig

**BY THE NUMBERS:**  
BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH  
CONSULTANTS

**18**  
behavioral health consultants  
hired with a goal of 36  
by the end of 2023

**175,000**  
kids in southeast  
Wisconsin who  
will have access  
to a licensed  
therapist  
through this  
program



## Alejandra’s story

Anxiety crept up on 16-year-old Alejandra slowly. The pandemic began and, like most kids, she was suddenly attending school virtually and isolating inside her home.

“The whole year, sitting at a computer for hours, I became really anti-social,” said Alejandra. “I didn’t know how to talk to people. Then when we started going back to school, it was really hard because I didn’t know how to socialize with anybody anymore.”

In the morning, as she would get ready for school, Alejandra would feel physically sick with anxiety. It would sometimes cause her to throw up, and she’d often not make it to the bus stop.

“I’ve never experienced anything like this,” Alejandra said. “It was just a lot of worry and constant fear of what if I get a panic attack? What if I can’t talk? What if I run out of breath while I’m talking?”

Alejandra tried to find a therapist but was told there was a six-month wait list. Thankfully, she had the courage to tell her pediatrician at Children’s Wisconsin-Midtown Clinic in Milwaukee. At that very same visit, Alejandra met Leann Vice-Reshel, PsyD, LPC, a behavioral health consultant. Vice-Reshel was part of the first group of licensed therapists to be hired in that role to work alongside Children’s pediatricians to provide early detection and intervention.

Alejandra began seeing Vice-Reshel fairly regularly. The sessions with behavioral health consultants are shorter than a typical therapy visit, but Vice-Reshel gave her coping skills like breathing exercises and positive affirmations to practice every morning.

After a few months, Alejandra was back in school regularly and feeling much better. She’s been sharing her experience with the hopes of helping other teens talk about their mental health.

“Leann helped me so much. Putting my story out there is scary, but I think if other teens can see I’m going through the same thing, and if I can get through it, you can too,” Alejandra said.

*Alejandra’s Behavioral Health Consultant, Leann Vice-Reshel gave her helpful tools to manage her anxiety*



# 2 UNIVERSAL SCREENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

*Expanding screening for depression and anxiety throughout the health system, regardless of the reason for the visit*

Mental health screening at appointments is crucial to identifying issues before they become a crisis. Depression screening has been integrated into standard practices at all Children’s primary care offices. All kids who screen positive are referred for follow-up care. A suicide screening tool is also in place in the Children’s Wisconsin Emergency Department and Trauma Center (EDTC). Since it was implemented, nearly 30,000 kids have been screened and more than 5,900 screened positive for mental health concerns. That is 5,900 kids who might have otherwise fallen through the cracks and not been offered the support they needed. Next steps include identifying the appropriate screening tool for specialty clinics.

## Screening in primary care

Caring for kids often focuses on prevention. Vaccines. Growth charts. Eye exams. Children’s Wisconsin is taking the same approach with mental health, a unique perspective in the country. Primary care teams have begun to have kids ages 5-11 complete a depression screening tool to identify potential behavioral health needs during annual wellness visits. Starting in 2021, the tool is consistently being used in more clinics and already 70 percent of families have completed the questionnaire. Kids ages 12 and older personally complete a suicide screening. By the beginning of 2022, 97 percent of all eligible kids had been screened.

In 2021, we started using the same suicide screening for children ages 11 and older in our inpatient units. Approximately 80 percent of qualifying inpatients have been screened, with 15 percent screening positive for a concern.



**When we focus on physical health, we only see part of the picture of overall health. This screening and subsequent interventions has helped countless kids since it was implemented.**



Michelle Pickett, MD, MS, physician in the Children’s EDTC. Dr. Pickett’s suicide screening tool was featured on “60 Minutes” in May 2022.



## Screening in the Emergency Department

In 2018, Michelle Pickett, MD, MS, an emergency medicine physician at Children’s Wisconsin and associate professor of Pediatrics at the Medical College of Wisconsin, started the program that has every child ages 10 and older who comes to the EDTC, answer these five questions on an iPad while parents complete registration forms:

“In the past few weeks, have you wished you were dead?”

“In the past few weeks, have you felt that you or your family would be better off if you were dead?”

“In the past few weeks, have you been having thoughts about killing yourself?”

“Have you ever tried to kill yourself?”

“Are you having thoughts of killing yourself right now?”

For the almost 6,000 kids who screen positive, the EDTC team confirms they have access to mental health support. If they don’t, a team member helps families identify resources. And in that mix are kids who were actively thinking of taking their own lives. “We’ve had four kids who came in for completely unrelated problems like a broken arm or earache. Through screening, we found they were acutely suicidal to the point that we needed to transfer them to an inpatient facility right then and there,” said Dr. Pickett.

The screening has been integrated into standard practice within the EDTC. Children’s Wisconsin is one of only six hospitals across the country completing the suicide screening in this fashion. Because of her innovative work, Dr. Pickett was recognized on the Milwaukee Business Journal’s “40 under 40” list in 2022.

### BY THE NUMBERS: UNIVERSAL SCREENING

**97** percentage of eligible kids who have received suicide screening in their pediatrician’s office

**10** age we begin screening kids for suicide risk in our Emergency Department

**5,900** number of kids who have screened positive for mental health concerns

# 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

*Coordinating the work of multiple specialists and programs for kids ages 5 and younger across the state*

Mental and behavioral health challenges and conditions are difficult to diagnose in the youngest kids and therefore often go untreated. Early Childhood Mental Health work is essential because we know that children ages 0 to 5 experience one of the most critical periods of brain development — and the incidence of mental health disorders in this age group mirrors that of older children and adolescents, and we can follow them into adulthood.

Early treatment can influence the trajectory of young children and their families — enhancing parent-child interactions and attachment, supporting healthy social-emotional development and even improving parents’ mental health. Young children treated for mental health disorders can learn to form close and secure adult and peer relationships, which help them to experience and express a full range of emotions. They can learn and practice resiliency, and often effects of adverse or traumatic experiences can be repaired.

With the goal of reaching and screening more kids at that vital early age, Children’s Wisconsin made it a priority to create a hub that pulls together and anchors the work being done by individual mental health providers and organizations across Wisconsin. Children’s is coordinating and linking the work of twelve early childhood mental health therapists in offices across the state. In the past two and half years, partnerships have been expanded, strengthened or developed with Froedtert’s Maternal Fetal Medicine program, Children’s Wisconsin Home Visiting program, Healthy Infant Court, and the Children’s Wisconsin Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

We have seen tremendous growth and the power of this coordination since the work formally began in 2020. Following are examples of progress to date. This team is:

- Working to add early childhood therapists across the state by mid-2022, based in Stevens Point and Eau Claire, and with two in the greater Milwaukee area.
- Applying for federal grants that can increase collaboration and standardization among community programs and partnerships.
- Expanding its partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In fall 2022, the team will support several students completing the Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Capstone Program and the Trauma Informed Child-Parent Psychotherapy training.

## Forging bonds and trust for Marissa and Mahaylah through early childhood intervention

“Becky taught me everything about how to raise a traumatized child,” said Katie Albright. Becky Verdin is one of the clinical supervisors of the Early Childhood Mental and Behavioral Health Clinic at Children’s and a licensed clinical social worker. Becky was the Albrights’ early childhood therapist for several years. The Albrights have four children ranging in age from 2 to 8, who they adopted or will soon adopt after fostering them. The two older girls — Marissa, 8, and Mahaylah, 6, have both benefited from early childhood intervention. They were moved in and out of foster care several times after experiencing abuse and neglect with their birth parents. Marissa experienced attachment disruptions and had difficulty understanding and regulating her emotions. Mahaylah also experienced attachment disruptions, resulting in a strong mistrust of adults.

Time spent with Becky for both girls included talking and playing about feelings and emotions and how to manage them when they feel big or out of control. They also engaged in Child Parent Psychotherapy, a model of trauma-informed play therapy that helped the girls learn to bond with Katie and Josh and to be able to feel comforted and trusting. The family set up a “zen zone” at home — a place for the girls to retreat and feel safe when needed — something Becky had suggested. Katie says she also has been able to share many of the tools they use at home with the girls’ school, so their teachers can extend those important nurturing and supportive therapies into the classroom and better understand their individual needs. Katie says she knows how to better parent her two younger children using the tools learned through their therapy.

“Becky is a saint,” said Katie. “She helps me navigate the entire family and our kids’ needs. She got us connected to resources like occupational therapy when we needed them, and she helps me think about things I would not have considered.”

As Marissa and Mahaylah “graduated” from the therapy program, a big celebration was held for each of them. Becky wanted to make sure they understood the difference between “good goodbyes” and “hard or sad goodbyes.”

“Both girls are doing really well right now, and I’m so grateful,” said Katie.



### BY THE NUMBERS: EARLY CHILDHOOD VISITS COMPLETED



746  
5,573  
3,008



(with a projected 6,000 visits completed by year end)

# 4 SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## Expanding school-based programs throughout Wisconsin

The school environment is one of the central places where kids learn and grow, and we know that connecting with kids in schools is essential to effective and early mental and behavioral health intervention. Children’s Wisconsin is a leading provider of innovative, evidence-based mental and behavioral health services that assist kids and families with issues such as anxiety and depression, trauma, low self-esteem, anger management, behavioral and social concerns, and school performance.



With that important integration in mind, Children’s Wisconsin set a goal to double our school-based mental health presence by 2024. This goal got an early boost with Kohl’s committing part of a \$5 million gift in 2019 to support additional schools. We already exceeded that goal by expanding from 30 to 67 schools where we provided in-school therapists by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. This integrated model allows master’s-trained therapists to work with kids alongside administrators, teachers, staff and parents during and after school in a comfortable, accessible and familiar setting they already know and trust.



**“The hope is that eventually every school has this. Because every school needs this.”**

– Rich Wytonick, principal, Knapp Elementary School, Milwaukee

### Creating a comfortable environment

Schools often are the first places parents and caregivers are exposed to mental health services. This can cause fear or discomfort for parents or anxiety about what this may mean for them or their child. To address this, Children’s therapists work closely with their school partners to increase their visibility as a part of the school community and culture. This means attending school events, celebrations and parent-teacher conferences, and offering or engaging in parent education events. Children’s therapists work alongside educators to learn as much as they can about a child referred to the program.

### PARENT/CAREGIVER SATISFACTION

**100%** of surveyed parents agreed or strongly agreed to the following prompts during the 2020-2021 school year:

- **My child receives behavioral health care and services when and where they need it.**
- **The provider listens carefully and understands my child’s needs.**
- **I am involved in my child’s treatment as much as I want.**
- **My child’s behavioral health provider is working with me and my child on the same goals.**

Children’s Wisconsin prioritizes hiring therapists who have a history of working with kids and families of diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as LGBTQ+. School partners are actively involved in the interviewing and recruiting process to ensure the therapist assigned to a school is a good fit.

### Expanding resources to meet changing school needs

Children’s Wisconsin is constantly reassessing to be thoughtful and nimble in developing best practices for how these services are delivered.

When an on-site therapist is not feasible for a school due to budget or other constraints, Children’s offers a growing menu of resources for students to access mental and behavioral health support. Some examples include:

- A part-time, pop-in model of care to meet with students identified as most needing mental and behavioral health intervention.
- Professional development trainings for educators to understand more about the mental, emotional and behavioral health needs of children and criteria for referrals. This includes trauma/trauma-informed care, self-care, mental health introduction and specific mental health disorders.
- Access to an expanding library of videos featuring Children’s therapists addressing a variety of mental and behavioral health topics for educators and school communities to use and share through Children’s Shine Through education and awareness campaign.
- Children’s e-learning Healthy Minds and Act Now Bullying Prevention programming that includes a new Cyberbullying mini-course for middle and high school-aged students, enrolled more than 225,000 Wisconsin students from 2020-2022. (Available at no cost to Wisconsin schools through HealthyKidsLearnMore.com)

### Analyzing data, improving access for all

The need for school-based support is in high demand. Children’s priority is to expand the depth and breadth of programming and support based on individual district needs, funding and other factors. Although our surveys show high levels of satisfaction with in-person school services, data also indicates there is much work to be done in reducing stigma and raising overall awareness. This can be addressed in part through elevated staff training as we work to increase access to mental and behavioral health support for all of Wisconsin’s kids.

During the pandemic, this program adopted digital tools to allow staff to continue to support kids through virtual visits. This was critical as the social isolation caused by the pandemic intensified the needs of most children. This support continues to be necessary as some kids have had to adjust back to in-person learning. Some kids were experiencing increased anxiety over fears of being sick, while others struggled with emotions and behaviors when they returned to the classroom.



### BY THE NUMBERS: SCHOOL SUPPORT



**30,042**

total enrollment of students in schools participating in Children’s School-based Mental and Behavioral Health program



**13,000+**

number of therapy sessions provided to students



**47,803**

number of hours therapists worked in schools

# 5 THERAPIST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

*Addressing the shortage of mental health providers by growing the workforce*

To improve access to mental and behavioral health care, Children’s Wisconsin set a goal to double our number of mental health providers—from 137 to 280. To meet that need, new training models and fellowship programs were created to increase the number of people seeking these careers and decrease the time it takes to complete their training.

The initial focus has been on the Therapist Fellowship Program, which supports future therapists by providing a salary and health insurance while they complete their clinical training hours. There are 14 fellows currently in the program; eight others completed it within the last year and have accepted positions at Children’s. While it typically takes around five years for prospective therapists to complete 3,000 hours of clinical training, Children’s fellows are completing those hours in less than two years. Without this support, most individuals need to work other jobs at the same time and take fewer courses.

“I would absolutely not be where I am today if it weren’t for this program,” shared Jessica Kotsakis, APSW, a program participant. “As a mother with a family to support, the time commitment alone would have made it impossible to pursue further licensure.”

The fellowship was one of the earliest programs to receive philanthropic support, with a \$1 million donation from The Boldt Company. The ultimate goal is to support at least 30 therapists by 2024.



Children’s has identified pediatric psychologists as another significant need. These experts support children who have been admitted to the hospital or who have chronic health conditions that impact their daily lives. Managing the pain and stress of these conditions can often be challenging for kids and families to manage.

With a projected need to hire more than 25 new psychologists over the next five years, Children’s Wisconsin is partnering with the Medical College of Wisconsin’s Department of Psychiatry, which has a residency program at Froedtert Hospital that trains future health psychologists to work with adult patients. The goal is to develop a pediatric track at Children’s and recruit the first class of residents in July 2023.

“Psychologists are in such high demand nationally,” said Cheryl Brosig, PhD, a psychologist at Children’s Wisconsin, and section chief and medical director of Pediatric Psychology and Developmental Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin. “We are committed to integrating psychologists into every subspecialty area, but this will require creative ways to expand our workforce.”

**BY THE NUMBERS:  
GROWING THE  
WORKFORCE**

**3,000**  
number of clinical training hours required to become a licensed therapist

**8**  
number of therapists who have completed the training and received licenses

**1,523**  
number of families supported through the Therapist Fellowship Program to date

## Training more therapists to help kids like Mariska

Like many kids, the stress of a global pandemic left its mark on 8-year-old Mariska. In 2021, her mom, Mindi, started to notice signs of anxiety.

“She had issues with sleep and was constantly worried about going into public areas with lots of people,” Mindi explains. “She wasn’t able to go to school, so she didn’t know when she would be able to see her friends or family. We think a lot was related to COVID.”

In addition to recommendations Mindi received for therapists, she also decided to call Children’s scheduling department. She made an appointment through Children’s with Jessica Kotsakis, APSW. When the two began meeting, they quickly bonded over their love of soccer. Jessica made Mariska feel at ease and provided useful tools that helped Mariska manage her anxiety.

“With the help of Jessica and Children’s, she’s got her ‘can-do’ attitude back. She has gained so much confidence, learned ways to cope with her feelings and is her quick-witted self again. We, as a family, are so thankful for all of the help we received,” Mindi says.

“Mariska was absolutely wonderful to work with. She is a talented, kind and thoughtful young lady with so many strengths and skills. This program allows me to share in the hardships and triumphs of special kids like her,” Jessica says.



*Mariska met with Jessica regularly. After a few months, she was back to her quick-witted self.*



### Therapist Fellowship Program is full of Health Care Champions

In 2021, the Milwaukee Business Journal named the Therapist Fellowship Program — under the leadership of Ann Rolling, PhD, and her team of Shanna Sullivan, LCSW, and Tamara Makhoul, LPC — Health Care Champions. Dr. Rolling, Shanna and Tamara are passionate about improving access to mental health care for kids. Jessica says their leadership and mentorship has been an invaluable asset to her.

# 6 URGENT AND EMERGENT MENTAL HEALTH

*Adding new entry points and support for kids in crisis*

Children's Wisconsin is transforming its infrastructure and adding unique entry points to better serve kids when a mental health need is identified. We're ensuring kids get the right care at the right time, no matter when their needs arise.

## Crisis Response Team in the EDTC

That's why we established the Crisis Response Team in 2020 — a dedicated pediatric psychiatric assessment team in the EDTC. The team includes a psychiatrist, three mental and behavioral health social workers, a mental and behavioral health navigator and a supervisor. When it was created, we estimated the team would support around 800 children a year. But that number has grown dramatically. The team helped nearly 1,000 kids in 2020 and close to 1,400 kids in 2021.

These numbers show the importance and critical timing of a partnership with the United Health Foundation, the philanthropic foundation of UnitedHealth Group. The \$2.5 million grant to Children's Wisconsin in 2020 helped establish the Crisis Response Team to make care available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and ensure mental health consultations, referrals and follow-ups are as seamless as they are for physical injuries treated in the EDTC.

## Mental health navigators offer follow-up support

The grant also helped create the role of a mental health navigator to follow up with every patient seen for mental health needs. To date, the navigator has successfully reached more than 90 percent of our discharged families who were seen in the EDTC for a mental and behavioral health concern. The navigator follows up to assure patients are connected with the services they need, and to offer further assistance if they are not.

"The navigator role has really helped us understand the different barriers families face after they leave us," shares Allison McCool, MSW, APSW, the social work supervisor on the team.



## Mental health training

Funding from the United Health Foundation grant also supported de-escalation training and trauma-informed education for all EDTC nurses and medical staff. This training is used when a patient is acting out in an aggressive or emotional way. When health care workers know how to de-escalate situations, it not only helps to keep everyone safe, but also helps patients calm themselves so they remain an active participant in their care.

The goal of all this work is to reduce the number of mental health crises among children — and provide a continuum of care that includes better access and improved care transitions. In some cases, recommendations for care might involve the new Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic that opened on our Milwaukee campus in March 2021.

## The Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic: A new option for kids in crisis

The day the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic opened to the public in March of 2022, six children came through its doors. Since then, 323 kids have been seen in the clinic. The average child seeking care is 12 years old, and more than half of the patients come from Milwaukee, with some coming from as far away as Manitowoc and Chicago.

"It's not unusual to see families drive an hour or longer because they had nowhere else to go. The purpose of this care model is to provide the right care at the right time whenever that child needs us," said Tammy Makhoulf, LPC, manager of the Walk-In Clinic.

Listening to the needs of families, the clinic opened in the evenings, from 3 – 9:30 p.m., when most other resources are closed for the day. A therapist or social worker is available to provide a safety evaluation and address any immediate concerns. They then have a brief therapy session and connect the family to school and community resources. This clinic is filling a critical gap in care.

One of those families was Akilah Adams and her 11-year-old daughter, Abrielle. Akilah found the clinic online and got help for her daughter that same evening.

"From the moment we arrived, the staff was so kind and helpful. They really took care of us. We are so grateful to have this in our community," said Akilah.



Akilah and Abrielle

**BY THE NUMBERS:  
URGENT AND  
EMERGENT CARE**

**40%** increase in all mental health-related visits to the EDTC since the pandemic began



**60%** increase in patients who had attempted suicide from 2020 to 2021 and were treated in Children's Wisconsin EDTC



**54%** of kids seen in the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic do not have a mental health care provider



# 7 PARTNERSHIPS WITH INPATIENT AND RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTERS

*Creating new models for collaboration and access*

Children’s Wisconsin is joined by many organizations and health systems that recognize the mental health needs of our community are not being met. Collaborating with one another, new and innovative models for mental and behavioral health care that improve access and outcomes are being tested and implemented. The focus is not to compete or duplicate efforts — but to partner on providing what will have the greatest impact on our community.

## New Mental Health Emergency Center to open in fall 2022

The new Mental Health Emergency Center, scheduled to open in fall 2022 at 1525 N. 12th Street in Milwaukee, is the next major milestone in our community’s journey toward holistic and equitable mental health care for children, adolescents and adults. The emergency center will offer 24/7 crisis



mental health assessment, stabilization, treatment and transition care management.

The Mental Health Emergency Center is a joint venture between Milwaukee County and the area’s four major health systems: Advocate Aurora Health, Ascension Wisconsin, Froedtert Health and Children’s Wisconsin. The center will serve as a national model for emergency crisis care that is patient-centered, recovery-oriented and culturally informed. Children’s has played an integral role in advocating

for access and needs of the pediatric population and in connecting key Children’s partners and experts in the development and planning of this center.

### Integrated Healing Program

In 2021, the Integrated Healing Program was created. The program provides support to teenagers who have physical pain to such an extent that they are experiencing emotional distress and are not able to participate in day-to-day activities like school or family events. The program team includes medical, health psychology and physical therapy experts from the Jane B. Pettit Pain & Headache Center at Children’s Wisconsin along with child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists from Rogers Behavioral Health. Together, they provide intensive rehabilitative, medical and mental health services.



This outpatient program is designed to treat patients holistically. Their physical, emotional and social needs are addressed in intensive, eight-hour daily sessions for four to six weeks. The program offers patients a chance to practice daily skills, moving and exercising with daily sessions of physical therapy and other activities. They participate in group sessions that teach them skills to manage stress and address mood and anxiety in relation to their pain.

The program has shown promising outcomes and preliminary success in demonstrating value and a positive patient experience.



*“To our knowledge, this care model is the first of its kind,” said Amanda Quesnell, director of Mental and Behavioral Health at Children’s Wisconsin. “This team leveraged the framework of the well-established, evidence-based behavioral health day treatment model of Rogers Behavioral Health, coupled with the knowledge and expertise of Children’s and the Medical College of Wisconsin’s medical, health psychology, and physical therapy providers. Through this work, a truly integrated healing program has emerged.”*

### Next steps

Strong leadership commitment and support has been essential in launching this program and will continue to be vital in assuring it moves forward. Next steps include conducting more in-depth analysis and demonstration of value for sustainability of the program in order to inform the long-term operational, financial and clinical aspects of this model. There also are plans to evaluate admission criteria to consider another track with additional programming. Having a program like this gives Wisconsin families, as well as those in the region, a much-needed care option for a patient population that is difficult to treat and often overlooked.

### BY THE NUMBERS: INTEGRATED HEALING PROGRAM



**100%** discontinued the use of medical assistance equipment by discharge

**43%** overall reduction in symptoms of depression

**33%** overall reduction in symptoms of anxiety

**51%** overall reduction in pain-related activity limitations

**28%** improved quality of life

**91%** of patients endorsed satisfaction with the treatment program

# SHINE THROUGH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

*Bringing kids' mental and behavioral health into the light*

Shine Through is Children's Wisconsin's mental and behavioral health awareness campaign. Launched in mid-2020, Shine Through brings to light the critical work Children's is doing to create solutions that address the urgent mental and behavioral health needs of kids across Wisconsin. Powerful messaging and visuals serve as a call to action, a message of empowerment and a beacon of hope. The campaign is supported by generous grants from Kohl's and the Reiman Foundation.



Together, we can Shine Through and light a way forward to better mental and behavioral health for kids across Wisconsin.

## Raising awareness and reducing stigma

**Video series:** Children's Wisconsin has created a web video series for educators, parents and caregivers that features our mental and behavioral health experts — a total of 26 videos to date. Some were developed for specific ages (0-5, 6-12, 13-17) and others are useful for parents with children of all ages. To date, the combined library of videos has been viewed 12,600,000 times. Topics include:

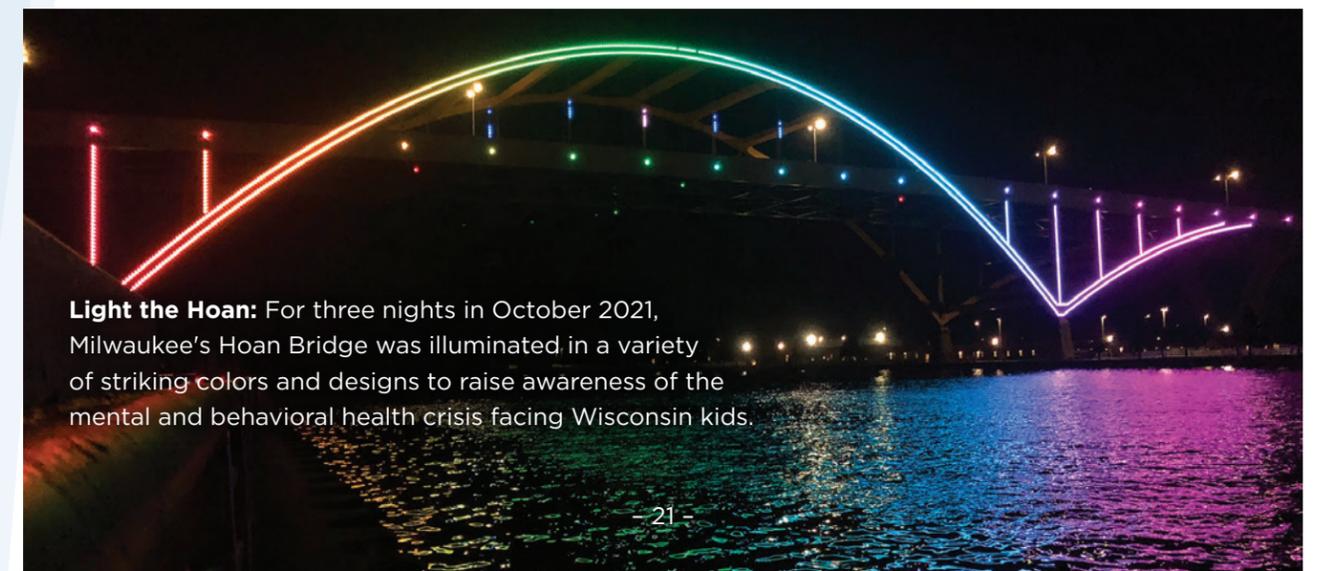
- Understanding ADHD in children
- Understanding anxiety in children
- How to engage with teachers to support your child's mental and behavioral health
- Conversation starters
- Common questions and concerns

**Shine Through pledge:** In August 2020, Children's Wisconsin leveraged Shine Through as a vehicle to raise awareness with parents during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and as kids headed back to school. Parents were encouraged to make a pledge to talk with their kids about their mental health and given materials to help them start those conversations.

**Advertising:** Children's Wisconsin has invested in an aggressive awareness campaign to reach parents across Wisconsin, utilizing radio, print, social media, digital display advertising, e-mail marketing, direct mail and more. To date, our advertising has been seen 31,300,000 times.

**Earned media:** Storytelling and awareness is an important part of Shine Through and Children's overall mental and behavioral health initiative. To date, local and national news outlets have written at least 237 stories for television, radio, print and online outlets, that have been seen more than 52,000,000 times.

**Building illuminations:** In August 2020, buildings of four community partners were illuminated to create a buzz about the campaign and prompt local media interest. The buildings were Kohl's in Menomonee Falls, Next Door Pediatrics in Milwaukee, Rexnord in Milwaukee and Knapp Elementary School in Racine.



**Light the Hoan:** For three nights in October 2021, Milwaukee's Hoan Bridge was illuminated in a variety of striking colors and designs to raise awareness of the mental and behavioral health crisis facing Wisconsin kids.



### BY THE NUMBERS:



**12,600,000**

video views

**237**

news stories

**31,300,000**

times advertisements have been viewed

**52,000,000**

times news stories have been viewed

# INVESTING IN HOPE AND NEW SOLUTIONS FOR MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Children’s provides the transformational vision. Our mental and behavioral health experts deliver compassionate, lifesaving care. But it takes a community to change what’s possible.

Without the philanthropic support of the community, these efforts would not be possible. All told, nearly 1,000 individuals and nearly 100 organizations have stepped up to help solve the growing mental and behavioral health crisis facing Wisconsin kids. Big and small, every gift makes a difference.



## Expanding the ripple effect

It takes visionary supporters to launch an initiative this ambitious. Since 2019, the Children’s Wisconsin Foundation has raised more than \$52 million for mental and behavioral health. The ripples from those significant early investments continue to expand far and wide.

**2018**

**SEPTEMBER**

The Boldt Company gives \$1 million to support the therapist fellowship program.

**2019**

**MARCH**

Kohl’s donates \$5 million to support mental and behavioral health, including universal screening, school-based staff and research, and mental health awareness.

**OCTOBER**

The Rexnord Foundation pledges \$1 million to support Children’s overall mental and behavioral health efforts.

**NOVEMBER**

Buoyed by a strong base of early support, Children’s announces a \$150 million, five-year investment in mental and behavioral health.

**2020**

**JANUARY**

Children’s announces a \$15 million, dollar-for-dollar matching pledge — then the largest single donation in Children’s history — from an anonymous donor later revealed to be the Reiman Foundation.

**MAY**

The United Health Foundation announces a \$2.5 million gift to establish a mental health crisis response team.

**OCTOBER**

Children’s announces a \$4 million donation from The Ladish Company Foundation to enhance emergency care, including new facilities designed for kids experiencing a mental health crisis.

**2021**

**APRIL**

Children’s meets the Reiman Challenge, including seven donors who contributed \$1 million or more: Dan and Karen Buehrle, Sue and Curt Culver, Jerry and Becky Jendusa and family, Mary and Ted Kellner, the Ladish Company Foundation, Rexnord Foundation and United Health Foundation.

**JULY**

The Yabuki Family Foundation commits \$20 million — setting a new record for Children’s largest single gift — and issues an accompanying \$5 million Change the Checkup Challenge to begin integrating mental and behavioral health therapists in every primary care office and urgent care location.

**NOVEMBER**

A record-breaking year for Giving Tuesday, bringing in \$237,403 in donations to the Change the Checkup Challenge. With the added generosity of The Yabuki Family Foundation, Kohl’s and the Mars Family Foundation and their “super match”, Children’s raises \$524,806 that day to advance and expand IMBH care for kids across Wisconsin.

**DECEMBER**

Children’s meets and exceeds the Change the Checkup Challenge, raising nearly \$5.2 million total.

## Change the Checkup

The Change the Checkup Challenge is just one example of the outpouring of support for our Mental and Behavioral Health program. In July 2021, The Yabuki Family Foundation and Children’s Wisconsin announced a \$20 million gift to transform the delivery of integrated mental and behavioral health care at every Children’s Wisconsin primary and urgent care location. In the hope of inspiring others to join this critical effort, the Yabuki family designated \$5 million of their gift as the Change the Checkup Challenge, a dollar-for-dollar matching gift opportunity.

Thanks to these generous investments in our kids, therapists and pediatricians are already working side by side, integrating mental and behavioral health into routine visits at Children’s locations across the region. Months-long waits for mental/behavioral health treatment have become same-day appointments. The early impact has been incredible: As of July 1, 2022, Children’s had **hired 18 full-time behavioral health consultants, served more than 9,000 patients, and decreased the patient therapy wait list by 30 percent.**

When fully staffed by the end of 2023, this program has the potential to reach every child in our care — 1 in 3 kids in southeastern Wisconsin. And we’re not stopping there. A dedicated research team will collect, analyze and publish data on the program so we can turn it into a national model, saving even more lives.

Together we are changing the conversation, changing the checkup — and changing the result.

### BY THE NUMBERS: CHANGE THE CHECKUP CHALLENGE



**\$5,190,430**  
documented commitments

**744**

gifts from 675 donors

**341**

donors gave their largest gift to Children’s

**197**

first-time gifts

**29**

states and Canada represented among donors

**711**

one-time gifts

**33**

multi-year commitments



Many responded to this campaign because they’d experienced firsthand the heartbreak of mental and behavioral health challenges in their own families. The Yabuki family made their transformational gift in honor of Jeff Yabuki’s younger brother, Craig, who died by suicide. Craig’s legacy lives on at Children’s: In October 2021, the new six-story building on the Milwaukee campus — formerly called the North Tower — was renamed the Craig Yabuki Tower.

And in March 2022, the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic officially opened on Children’s Milwaukee campus. A first-of-its-kind in the state, the clinic is open seven days a week to provide immediate support to kids ages 5-18 with urgent mental health needs. The new clinic helps serve a growing population — since 2020, Children’s has seen a 40 percent increase in emergency visits for mental health reasons. These cases are still referred to the hospital’s EDTC, where a behavioral health crisis team — funded by a \$2.5 million gift from the United Health Foundation — is available to help kids in crisis 24/7.



## Raising awareness for the cause

As stated on page 20, in addition to raising funds, Children's also raised awareness of the mental and behavioral health crisis facing our kids. By creating visibility and starting a conversation around the mental and behavioral health crisis facing our kids and families, we could reduce stigma and help families and the community put mental health on the same plane as physical health.

Children's created the Shine Through website ([shinethrough.childrenswi.org](http://shinethrough.childrenswi.org)) with resources to educate and support families and caregivers, and we leveraged media and advertising — and Children's strong platform of trust as a community leader — to start a public conversation around pediatric mental and behavioral health.

Children's public awareness campaign would not have been possible without the generous support of Kohl's, and our supporters have been essential champions for this cause. Throughout 2021, our Shine Through Affinity Group volunteers organized conversations with their networks to highlight Children's IMBH efforts and inspire others to join the movement, bringing our message to numerous local and national organizations ranging from the Greater Milwaukee Committee to Young Presidents' Organization. In April 2021, many volunteers and key partners were also involved in Children's Shine Through virtual event, which featured Kohl's CEO Michelle Gass and educated attendees on Children's work creating solutions for mental and behavioral health.

We are deeply grateful for our benefactors' and volunteers' time, commitment and advocacy. We have accomplished so much together and are excited for the work ahead.

## Our vision for the future

Thanks to the incredible generosity and partnership from our community, Children's has accelerated a transformation in pediatric mental and behavioral health in Wisconsin. We've already made remarkable progress. But we still have a long way to go to fully realize our vision. We won't stop until every child gets the support they need, at the right time, to grow up healthy and thriving. The future of our kids — of our community — depends on our success. With sustained philanthropic support, we can put the following critical initiatives into action:

- 1) **Integrating care so there is no "wrong door."** We're transforming the way we practice by offering mental and behavioral health services at every touch point — wherever kids and families are. Building on the work we've already begun in our hospitals and clinics, we will expand to places where kids live, learn and play.
- 2) **Investing in targeted services.** Although we will meet the needs of most kids through our integrated care, we will offer targeted mental and behavioral health services to specific populations that require more significant levels of care.
- 3) **Training the workforce of tomorrow.** We're transforming our organizational structure and training models to create a robust pipeline of new IMBH providers to detect mental and behavioral health problems before they escalate, alleviate wait times and meet the growing needs of the community.
- 4) **Creating a blueprint to scale our transformative approach.** We're transforming the entire landscape of pediatric care through game-changing research that enables us to share our best practices with the nation. Together, we will inspire a new standard of care.

## Join us

Children's is leading the nation in a groundbreaking approach to promoting mental well-being for all kids, but we can't do it without you. Please join us in this vital, lifesaving work:

### Philanthropic Support:

Additional support — gifts or multi-year pledges of any amount — will help us continue to grow and evolve this work to meet the full needs of Wisconsin's kids. You can donate online at [giving.childrenswi.org](http://giving.childrenswi.org) or contact Beth Dolan at (414) 266-3448 or [edolan@childrenswi.org](mailto:edolan@childrenswi.org) to discuss additional giving opportunities.

### Advocacy:

We need more advocates to share our story and inspire others to support the cause. Please contact Heather Schilter at (414) 266-4050 or [hschilter@childrenswi.org](mailto:hschilter@childrenswi.org) to explore advocacy opportunities.

Thank you for your continued support!

**SHINE**  
THROUGH

Creating Solutions for Mental & Behavioral Health



Creating Solutions for Mental & Behavioral Health

[childrenswi.org/shinethrough](https://childrenswi.org/shinethrough)