Children's Mental Health Network



November 6, 2026

Topic: Children's Mental Health Prevention

Belonging
the key to wellness

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF
Children's
Mental Health

Agenda

1. OCMH Announcements
2. Setting the Context / Data
3. State Mental Health Organizations Speak on Prevention
4. Showcasing Prevention in Schools
5. Policy as Prevention
6. Youth Perspective on Prevention
7. Learn More – Small Group Discussion (select your room)
8. Adjourn

Meeting topic:
Children's Mental Health Prevention

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OCMH Updates

Annual Poll Survey:

- What children's mental health topics do you want to learn more about in 2027?



Children's Mental Health Network:

- Sign up to be on the distribution list



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OCMH Updates

Friday, Dec. 11,
12-12:45 pm
Virtual



Break down the data • Hear from experts

Register

Children's Mental Health Prevention

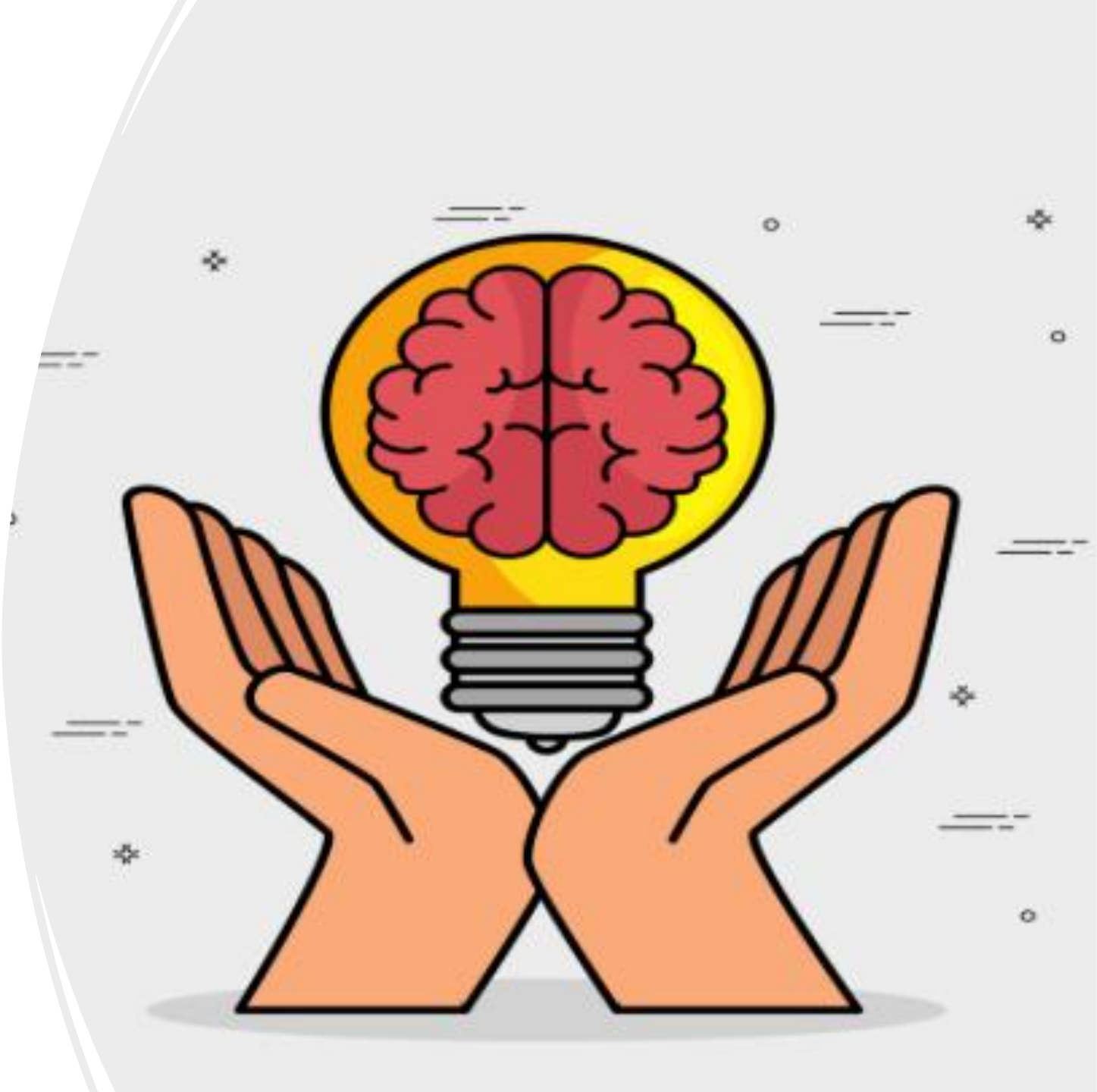


Prevention

Why is this the time to talk about prevention?

What can we learn from the past?

*What are the possibilities going forward**?***



Children's Mental Health Prevention

Poll Question:

What comes top of mind when you hear "children's mental health prevention"?



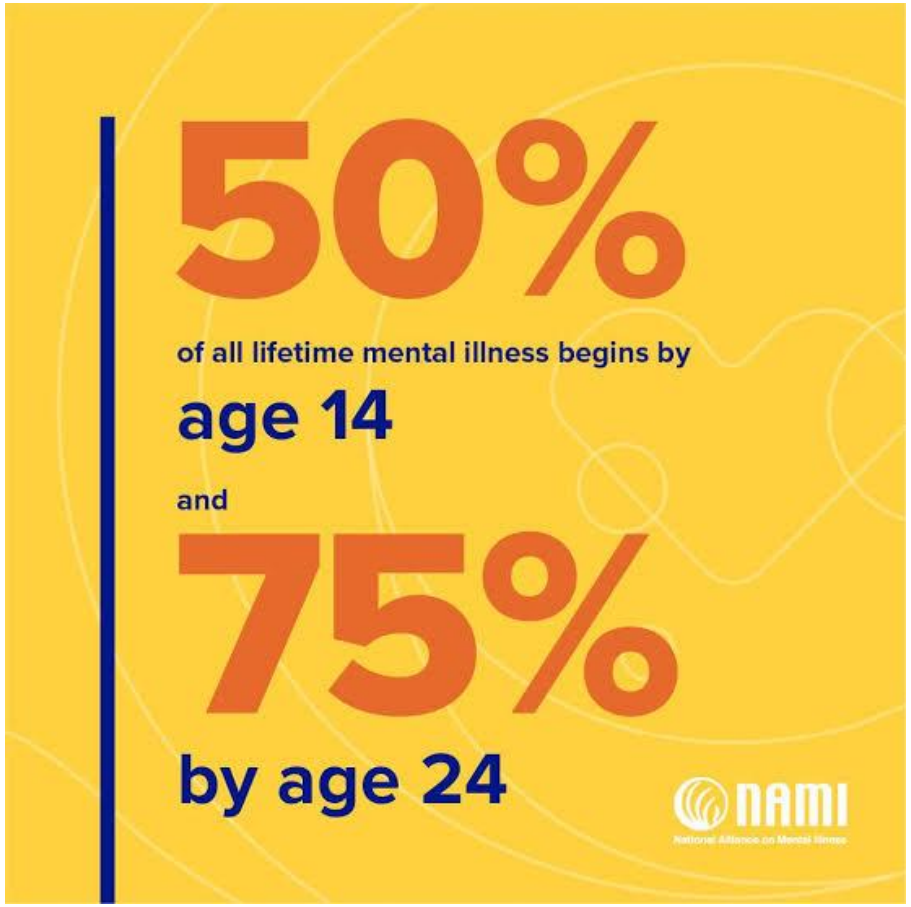
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Children's Mental Health Prevention

Amy Marsman
Senior Research Analyst – OCMH



Most mental illness begins in youth.



NAMI Mental Health by the Numbers
https://www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/

Serious implications for youth.



NAMI Mental Health by the Numbers
https://www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/

Serious delays in treatment.



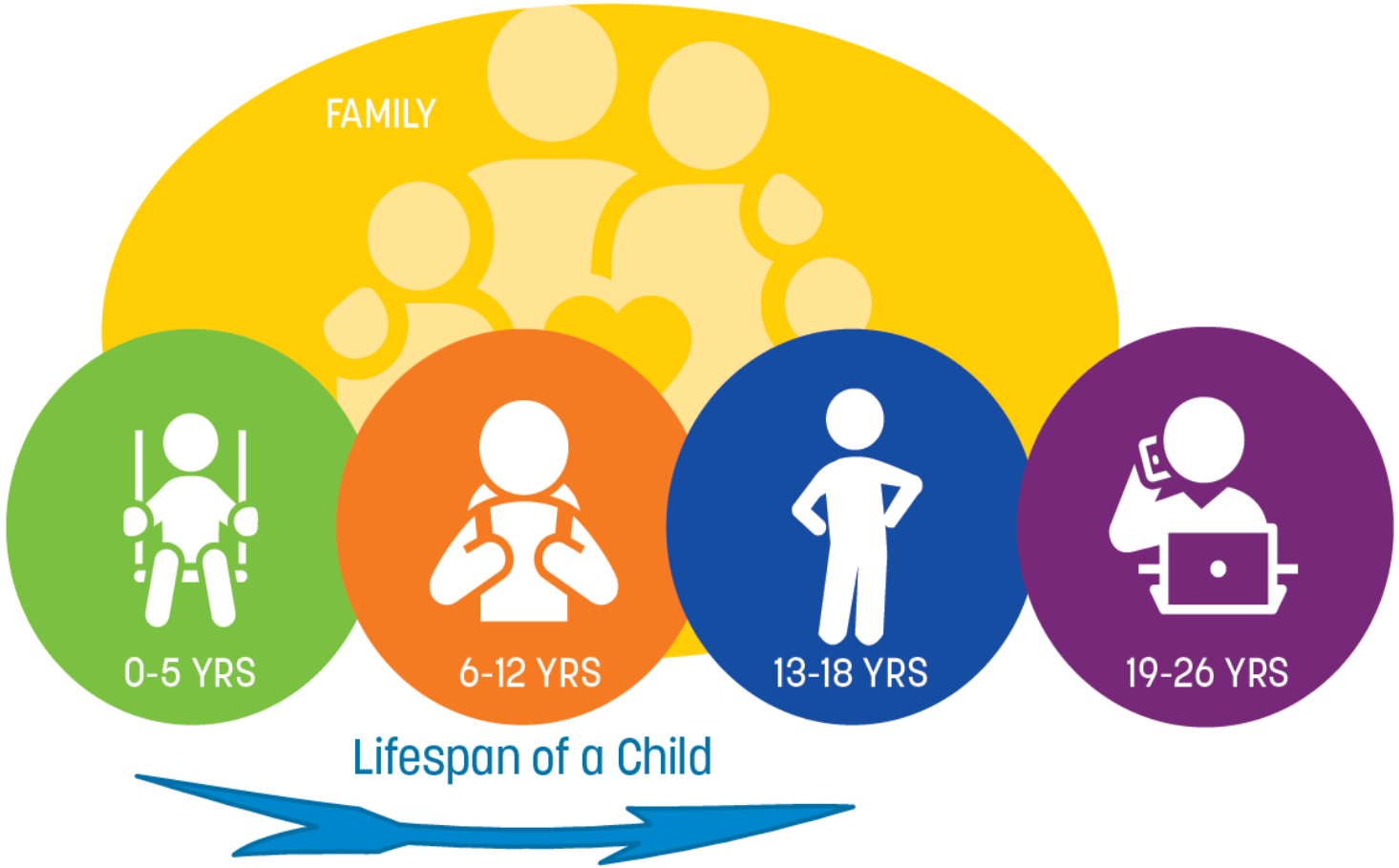
5-year-old with symptoms → **16 years old.**

10-year-old with symptoms → **21 years old.**

20-year-old with symptoms → **31 years old.**

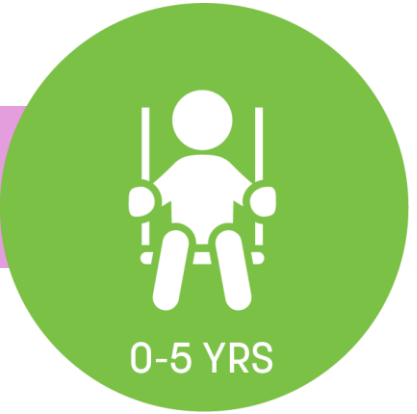
NAMI Mental Health by the Numbers
https://www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/

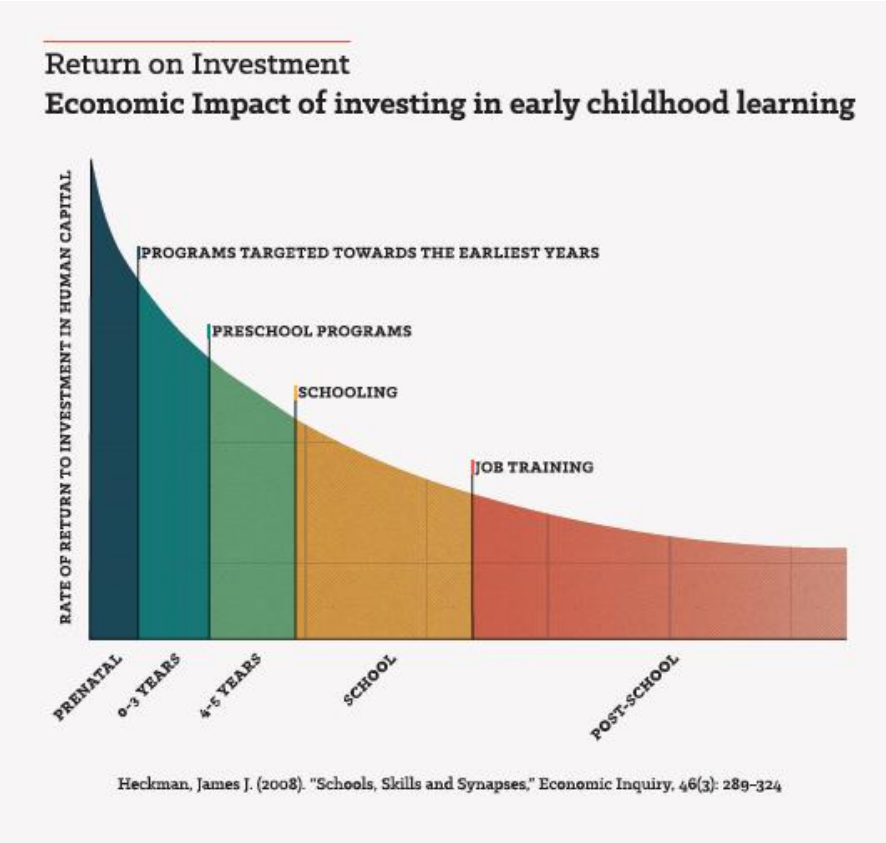
Prevention protects mental health.



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The earlier the better.



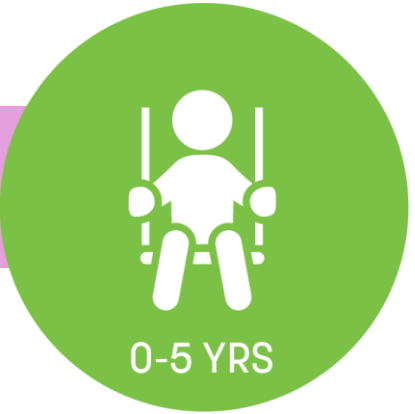


The Heckman Curve

- Investing in early childhood has a large return on investment.
- The earlier the investment, the greater the return.
- Prioritize investment for at-risk children.
- Develop cognitive and SEL skills early.

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Preschool is prevention.



High-quality preschool programs **reduce behavioral problems and special ed placements** and improve:

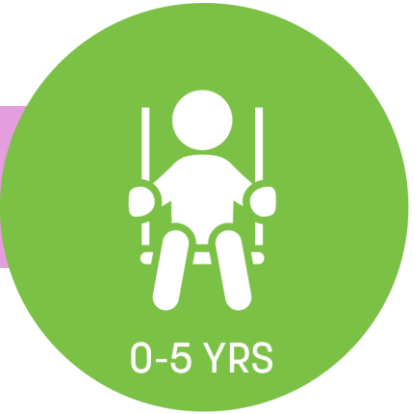
- ✓ child self-regulation
- ✓ peer interactions
- ✓ emotional competence

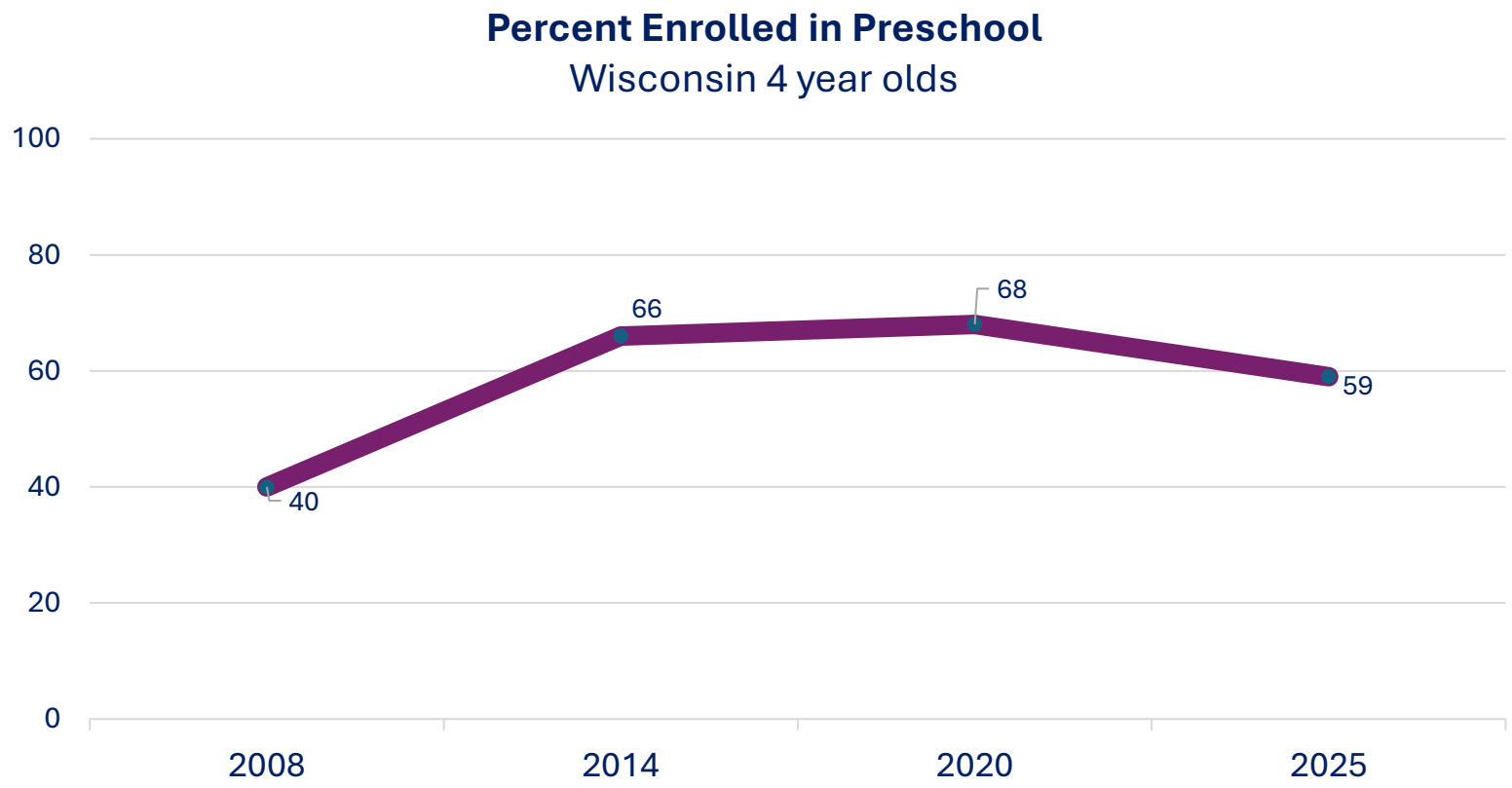
Plus, **long-term impacts**:

- ✓ More likely to graduate HS, be employed and earn higher salary
- ✓ Less likely to be incarcerated

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Preschool is prevention.





National Institute for Early Education Research
https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/2025_wisconsin_enroll_line_150ppi.png

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SEL is prevention.



IN DEPTH

Research Finds Social and Emotional Learning Produces Significant Benefits for Students

Academic Performance, Well-Being, and Perceptions of School Safety All Improved

July 14, 2023



Yale School of Medicine
https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/new-research-published-in-child-development-confirms-social-and-emotional-learning-significantly-improves-student-academic-performance-well-being-and-perceptions-of-school-safety/

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SEL is prevention.



SEL participation linked with **less anxiety, stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts.**

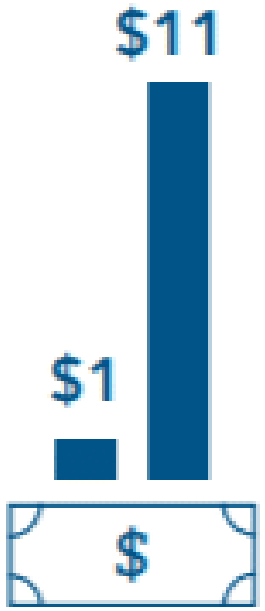
And **improves**:

- ✓ emotional regulation
- ✓ relationships
- ✓ self-esteem
- ✓ perseverance
- ✓ optimism

Yale School of Medicine
https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/new-research-published-in-child-development-confirms-social-and-emotional-learning-significantly-improves-student-academic-performance-well-being-and-perceptions-of-school-safety/

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SEL is prevention.



Integrating social and emotional development with academic learning returns

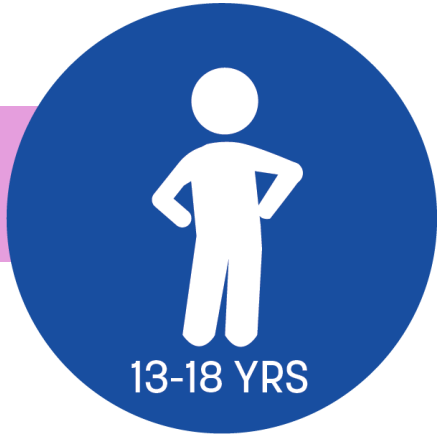
$11 for every $1 invested.[10]

Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Columbia University
https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-benefit-cost-analysis/article/economic-value-of-social-and-emotional-learning/D9A12352A7CF1B39E9A2B7EA4C68F150

6-12 YRS

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School mental health is prevention.



Comprehensive school mental health programs work to address the mental wellbeing needs of students via culturally-responsive services throughout a continuum of levels:

LEVEL 1:
UNIVERSAL EDUCATION, PREVENTION

LEVEL 2:
TARGETED GROUP SUPPORTS

LEVEL 3:
INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES

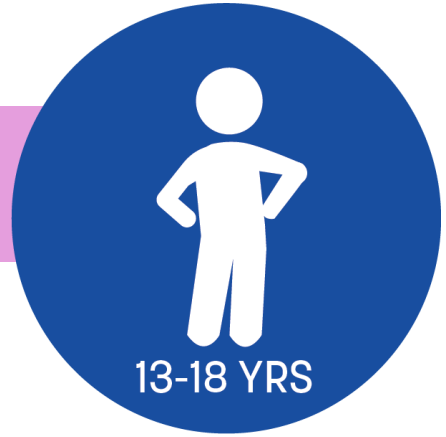
**Individualized services = access to clinical therapy & consultation for students with more complex challenges.*

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH?

Coalition for Expanding School Mental Health in Wisconsin
https://www.schoolmentalhealthwisconsin.org/

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School mental health is prevention.



This continuum of services helps students navigate life's challenges with **resiliency** using various strategies:

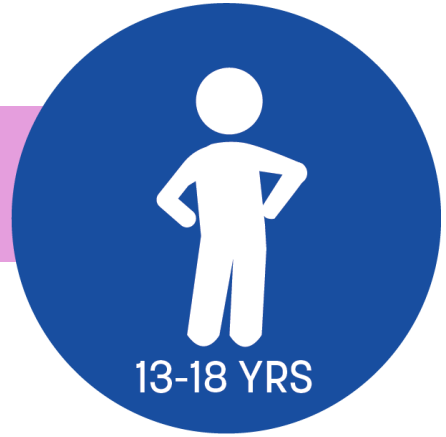


- Conflict resolution
- Self-regulation
- Communication of needs and boundaries
- Mindfulness
- Mental health literacy

Coalition for Expanding School Mental Health in Wisconsin
https://www.schoolmentalhealthwisconsin.org/

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School mental health is prevention.



School-Based Mental Health (*universal practices*)

- Mental health literacy and stigma reduction
- Out-of-School-Time (OST) programming
- Peer-to-Peer suicide prevention and support
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Restorative practices and discipline policies
- Skills-based health education
- Staff wellness and compassion resilience programs
- Substance use prevention

DPI, The Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework Building and Sustaining a Comprehensive System Wisconsin
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/Wisconsin_School_Mental_Health_Framework_-_Building_and_Sustaining_a_Comprehensive_System.pdf

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Food and shelter are prevention.



3 in 5

of students experience basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing.

44%

of students experience clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, Temple University
https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey/2023-2024-student-basic-needs-survey-report

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Food and shelter are prevention.





Hunger is linked to multiple mental health problems in youth.

>> Because hunger adversely affects child development, food insecurity creates more of a risk to children's mental health than to adult mental health.

30% of HS students who are food insecure **seriously considered suicide.**

OCMH Data Bite
https://children.wi.gov/Pages/ResearchData/DataBites.aspx

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State Mental Health Organizations Speak on Prevention

NAMI Wisconsin – Mary Kay Battaglia, Executive Director

Mental Health America Wisconsin – Martina Gollin-Graves, President/CEO

Showcasing Prevention in Schools

WEA Member Benefits Foundation's School-based Mental Health Initiative
– Steve Goldberg, Executive Director

Mental Health America Lakeshore's Resilient Schools
– Julie Preder, Executive Director

Random Lake School District UNYTUS program
– Mike Trimberger, Superintendent

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Break

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Policy as Prevention

Darren Rausch, Public Health Policy Director – Division of Public Health, **Wisconsin Department of Health Services**

Amy Herbst, Vice President – **Children's Wisconsin**, Leading Pediatric Care Initiatives

Jane Penner-Hoppe, Senior Policy Advisor – **Wisconsin Department of Children and Families**

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Youth Perspective on Prevention

Andrea Turtenwald
Family Relations Coordinator – OCMH



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

Insights on Prevention from the 2026-27 Youth Mental Wellness Champion Cohort

What does Prevention mean to you?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

Mental health prevention to me means that people in the world are ***educated and encouraged enough to identify and help*** *those who are struggling.*

Kodiak, Shawano High School

What does Prevention mean to you?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

To me, mental health prevention means that ***communities and families have to come together to actively support and monitor their youth*** *to see what issues they are facing and how to combat them. The same applies for adult prevention as well.*

Anonymous 2026-27 Youth Mental Wellness Champion

What does Prevention mean to you?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

It means heading off crisis. *This could mean suicidal ideation, a breakdown, or anything distressing enough to qualify as such. Prevention is so multifaceted. There is* ***education, resources, socialization, connection building****, etc. It is also important to* ***acknowledge suicidal thoughts*** *(which are incredibly important to take seriously)* ***aren't the only type of crisis.***

Jenny, Neenah High School

What does Prevention mean to you?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

My biggest thing is keeping people informed, especially on the fact that they are not alone, because really sometimes ***it isn't something that can be prevented****, it is a part of a lot of people. But* ***some of the outcomes can be prevented through education and community.***

Kylynn, Waukesha North High School

Summary – Defining Prevention

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People know how to help, monitor youth in their life, and intervene to minimize harm from crises and distressing situations.

Prioritize connection and community so those who are struggling know they are not alone.

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Education

If mental health were taught in every school, what should the first lesson be?

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Recognizing that ***everyone has mental health.***

Juniper, Northstar Academy

If mental health were taught in every school, what should the first lesson be?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

It is okay to feel. *More specifically, that* ***all emotions are valid*** *and stem from things we might not even be aware of. This I would hope allows people to feel validated and safe in talking about mental health*.

Emerald, Hmong American Peace Academy

If mental health were taught in every school, what should the first lesson be?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

*That **mental health is just as important as physical health** and to be a truly healthy individual **people need to take care of their body and mind**, because they are highly interconnected.*

Kodiak, Shawano High School

If mental health were taught in every school, what should the first lesson be?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

I think it's so important to understand that people don't get to decide their mental health, and I think going through ***the different reasons that people struggle with their mental health*** *is super important and it could break down a ton of stigma that I still see that it's ever present today.*

Anonymous 2026-27 Youth Mental Wellness Champion

If mental health were taught in every school, what should the first lesson be?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

I would want the first lesson to focus on understanding mental health, including ***ways to recognize when we or others may need help****. I think teaching young people about mental health from an early age could help them better understand themselves and others,* ***creating a culture where asking for help is encouraged****.*

Zoey, Muskego High School

Summary – Education

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We all have mental health. We struggle for different reasons. It is ok to feel – your emotions are valid.

We must take care of our body and our mind. Recognize when you need to ask for help.

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Mental Health

Prioritizing Young People's Well-Being

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

Education. Education. Education. *I think people having a vast knowledge on this topic has amazing immediate and long-term consequences. It would reduce stigma, open people's eyes up to the options they have, make kids feel less alone.* ***So much good can come from learning.***

Kylynn, Waukesha North High School

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

School would be less restrictive. *For example, a lot of current schools still treat mental health as something of low priority, when it still affects students quite strongly. If* ***more time, research, and funding was allocated to helping student mental health*** *then I feel* ***schools would be a more enjoyable place***.

Juniper, Northstar Academy

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

I think a world that genuinely prioritized young people's well being would be a world with a lot of support systems and education on mental health, in order to genuinely prioritize it we need to ***educate adults and children alike and develop the proper support systems for all groups of people, not just some,*** *to genuinely prioritize young peoples well being.*

Kodiak, Shawano High School

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

*This world would have **lower voting age**, increase funding for the arts, **collectively support education and extracurricular activities**, and make higher-level education and **degrees cheaper if not free**.*

Anonymous 2026-27 Youth Mental Wellness Champion

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

*I think **young people would be loved and recognized for who they are and who they choose to be**. Young people would not have pressures of perfectionism, traditions, etc. instilled on their identity.*

Emerald, Hmong American Peace Academy

What would a world that genuinely prioritized youth well-being look like?

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

*To me, it would be a world where **young people's mental health is valued just as much as their academic and extracurricular achievements**.*

*It would be a world where **young people feel heard, supported, and accepted** without feeling the need to hide their struggles or meet unrealistic expectations.*

*I envision a society that prioritizes prevention, makes mental health resources accessible, and **encourages meaningful conversations about mental health before someone reaches a breaking point**.*

*Mostly, **I hope for a world where young people feel they belong and they don't have to face their struggles alone.***

Zoey, Muskego High School

Small Group Discussion

Select Your Discussion Room

1. **Youth Perspective** – Andrea Turtenwald
2. **Programs in Schools** – Julie Preder, Mike Trimberger, Steve Goldberg
3. **Policy** – Linda Hall, Darren Rausch, Amy Herbst, Jane Penner-Hoppe

Discussion questions:

1. Any questions you have.
2. What do you see working in prevention?



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Next Meeting

February 5, 2027

10 am-12 pm

Virtual

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