



# NEWSLETTER

January 2021 Edition

## Contents:

- OCMH 2020 Annual Report
- Parent Voice Heard in Child Welfare
- Feelings Thermometer continues to be a Popular Tool
- Legislative & Policy Updates
- Children's Mental Health in Professional Literature
- Of Interest

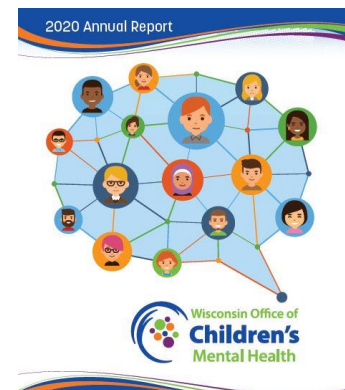
Welcome to the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) January Newsletter!

## OCMH 2020 Annual Report

OCMH released its 2020 Annual Report on children's mental health in Wisconsin in a briefing on January 7th with First Lady Kathy Evers making opening remarks. It was the second annual briefing event OCMH held, this year via Zoom, and nearly 150 people attended from across the state.

The report features 31 children's mental health indicators. The event presentation highlighted indicators that show both improvements made in Wisconsin as well as areas that need improvement. Data presented included:

- Nearly 60% of students in 9-12<sup>th</sup> grades experienced depression, anxiety, self-harm, or suicidal ideation in 2019, another increase over previous years.
- Although 90% of all kids graduate high school within 4 years, 31% of those who don't are Black.
- In 2018 11% of Black children needed but did not receive mental health treatment compared to only 2% of white children.
- 16% of all high school students have considered dying by suicide.
- 6% more parents are completing early developmental screenings



Existing disparities in education, economic stability, and mental health were identified as measures to examine Wisconsin's progress towards achieving health equity.

The full report is available on the [OCMH website](#).

## Parents Voice Heard in Child Welfare

### Parents Voice Heard in Child Welfare

In December 2020 OCMH held four informational sessions for parents with child welfare lived experience. The goal was two-fold: 1) to hear the experience of parents involved in child welfare, and 2) to recruit participants to join a workgroup that will help inform child welfare practice in Wisconsin.

There was an overwhelming positive response to the sessions with over 40 parents and community members participating. When asked, "I wish my social worker would have..." some participants said:

- gotten to know me
- listened to me
- kept me in the loop

- not judged me
- not changed so often

Monthly meetings will be in January to continue to learn from parents, provide feedback to the Department of Children and Families, and help parents develop their leadership skills.

## Feelings Thermometer continues to be a Popular Tool for Emotional Regulation

OCMH introduced the Feelings Thermometer last August, amid COVID-19's causing people to live in close quarters. The thermometer takes the emotional temperature of individuals and provides strategies for calming when emotions are escalating. First Lady Kathy Evers was an early supporter of the Feelings Thermometer and has spoken to Wisconsinites about their use of the tool. In a December 2020 interview she interviewed a 5-year old and her mother on how they used the Feelings Thermometer. The 5-year old is a strong advocate for the tool and even shared advice for the Governor in using the thermometer after a hard day. [Watch the video.](#)



## Children's Mental Health Stigma – OCMH Fact Sheet

Supporting Child Well-Being through Eliminating Stigma is the topic of OCMH's most recent Fact Sheet (December 2020). The consequences of mental health stigmatization can significantly affect a child's mental health outcomes, creating barriers for children in obtaining timely and appropriate mental health care. Learn more about children's mental health stigma, what is happening in Wisconsin, and what can be done. [Read the Fact Sheet.](#)



## The Voices of Wisconsin Students Project – Inviting Students to Participate

Students are invited to share their voice on learning, coping, and building resiliency during COVID-19. The Voices of Wisconsin Students Project will conduct in-depth interviews with Wisconsin students in 6th – 12th grade to identify concerns, challenges, successes, resiliency, and what students need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions student participants will explore include:

- How is school and learning going for you during COVID-19?
- What are current sources of stress or anxiety and what challenges are you experiencing?
- What is going well? What new strategies are you and your fellow students using to cope better?
- What kinds of additional resources and support do you wish you had?
- What do you want school and community leaders to know about how COVID-19 is impacting students?

This project is a partnership of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), the Medical College of Wisconsin, and the UW Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) Research Partners with the support of the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH).

Focus groups will be via Zoom and held in January and February. [Learn more and register.](#)

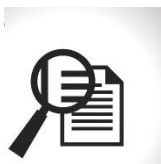
## Legislative & Policy Update

**COVID-19.** Assembly Bill 1 passed on January 7<sup>th</sup>. It included numerous COVID-related provisions. Children's mental health is not mentioned specifically in the bill, however, two school-related provisions are of interest. As amended, the bill requires that a school district not close a school building to in-person instruction, or close the building to in-person instruction for a specific grade level, for more than 14 days unless extended by a two-thirds vote of the school board. Each extension may be for no more than 14 days. A school building that is only open for in-person instruction for pupils receiving special education or related services is considered to be closed to in-person instruction. The bill requires reporting on the use of virtual instruction in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years and include an explanation of whether the school board contracted with an experienced virtual instruction provider to provide all or part of the implemented virtual instruction. The school board's reports do not need to include information about virtual instruction provided by a virtual charter school. The Legislative Council has posted a comprehensive summary of the [bill provisions](#). The Senate has indicated that it will not be taking up the Assembly's bill. The Legislature is also not expected to take up the Governor's COVID-related bill ([2019 LRB-6592](#)) proposed on January 4th.

**Telehealth.** DHS is working to develop permanent telehealth policies to replace the temporary flexibilities. A new Telehealth External Policy Feedback Work Group meeting series is open to all stakeholders. For additional information on the meetings, including meeting dates and times, background, agendas, and meeting minutes, refer to the DHS [Stakeholder Engagement webpage](#). Additional information regarding telehealth expansion is available on the [Telehealth Expansion and Related Resources for Providers page](#) of the ForwardHealth Portal and the DHS [Medicaid Telehealth Expansion webpage](#).

## Children's Mental Health in Professional Literature

*OCMH Senior Research Analyst Melissa Murphy spotlights new, open access articles about children's mental health.*



Adverse childhood experiences and mental and physical health disparities: the moderating effect of race and implications for social work. [Read the article.](#)

Effects of the Global Coronavirus Disease – 2019 Pandemic on Early Childhood Development: Short- and Long-Term Risks and Mitigating Program and Policy Actions. [Read the article.](#)

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Early Childhood Care and Education. [Read the article.](#)

The potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child growth and development: a systematic review. [Read the article.](#)

More articles are available on the [OCMH Website](#).

## Of Interest

### **School Based Mental Health Service Grant Competition 2021-2023**

This grant program provides grant funding for two years to public school districts and independent charter schools to work with community mental health providers to create comprehensive school-based mental health systems. The next competition for the 2021-2023 school based mental health grants will be launched this month. All grant application materials will be posted on the [grant website](#). Applications will be due May 3, 2021, and the application process will be online submission only.

**Human Trafficking Awareness Month** is January. Governor Evers issued a [proclamation](#) recognizing this awareness month in Wisconsin.

The Office of Children's Mental Health  
[Children.wi.gov](http://Children.wi.gov)  
[OCMH@wisconsin.gov](mailto:OCMH@wisconsin.gov) • Follow us on Twitter @WIKidsMH