



SUPPORTING CHILD WELL-BEING THROUGH SUPPORTING PARENTS UNDER STRESS

NOV 2021

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The COVID-19 pandemic and related disruptions have placed enormous stress on families. Parents' stress levels matter for their own well-being. It's also one of the main predictors of a child's stress, well-being, and behavior. Supporting parents is one of the most effective ways to support children's mental health.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WISCONSIN?

There are bright spots for Wisconsin parents. Even though Wisconsin adults have high mental health needs during this time, Wisconsin is one of three states with the biggest *decrease* in adult depression from January to June 2021.⁵ The other two states were Idaho and Michigan.

Family Resource Centers (FRC) have information and support for families throughout the state. FRCs help parents access resources, provide parenting tips and stress management, help parents connect with one another, and provide fun programming for children.

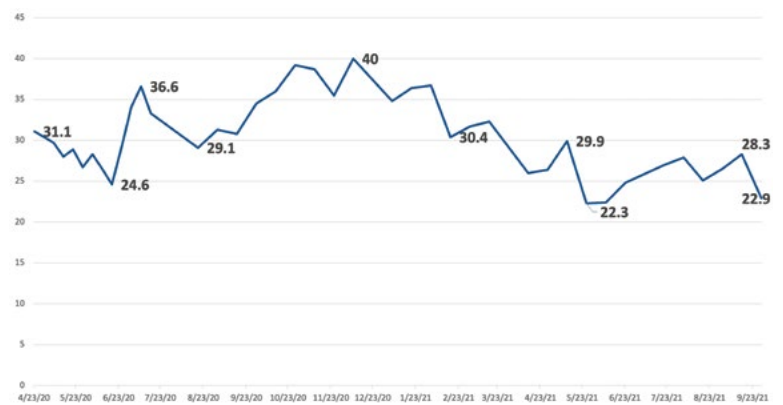
Bright By Text service and Department of Children and Families' Ready4k provide text-based parenting tips and resources that parents can use immediately. Bright By Text has approximately 2,000 active parent subscribers in Wisconsin.⁶



WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- ▶ Adults — especially younger and parenting adults¹ — are experiencing unusually high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression at this historic moment.
- ▶ More than half of mothers of young children (51%) reported frequent or constant loneliness during this time.²
- ▶ Virtual school, childcare closures or disruptions, and ongoing student quarantines all present challenges to working parents. Nationally, families of color have taken the biggest hit to their jobs and incomes.³ Parents who are facing economic or health problems face particularly high levels of stress.
- ▶ Focus groups with Wisconsin parents highlighted the stress of meeting basic needs, accessing mental health and addiction support, and finding spaces where their kids can be safe, included and connected—especially for rural families and families of color.⁴

PERCENT OF WISCONSIN ADULTS WITH SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY (APRIL 2020-SEPT 2021)



Source: U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey



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WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- ➔ Realize that you're not alone. These are hard times for most families.
- ➔ Dial 211, Family Resource Centers, Well Badger or similar sites to get information on resources to help meet families' basic needs like housing, food, safety, and health care.
- ➔ Get help with kids' behavior problems or challenges. This can be through a therapist, the school, home visitors, your pediatrician or reputable apps or websites such as the text services listed above or the Parent Hotline (414) 671-0566.
- ➔ Remove any stressors you can. Take care of yourself through exercise (even a few minutes); sleep; meditation, prayer or quiet time; time with supportive friends or family; and doing things you enjoy. This can be as small as listening to a song you like or texting a friend.
- ➔ Notice things that you enjoy or appreciate about your kids.
- ➔ Give yourself credit for what you're doing well.
- ➔ Take a time out if you feel yourself getting overwhelmed. The OCMH feelings thermometer offers tips that adults or children can use to help stay in control of their emotions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➔ POLICYMAKERS

- Support family leave policies.
- Ensure adequate funding and support for childcare, especially in parts of the state with the greatest need.
- Support policies and programs that give parents the time and space to connect with one another.

➔ COMMUNITIES

- Embrace parenting networks like the [Parenting Network Parent Hotline](#).
- Support intergenerational spaces and initiatives, where older adults can connect with kids or advise and support younger parents.

➔ EMPLOYERS:

- Provide employees with flexibility to meet their caretaking obligations.
- Disseminate information about resources for parents.



REFERENCES:

¹ 2021 Child Mind Institute report on COVID

² Weissbourd et al. (October 2021). "Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness and What We Can Do About It." Making Caring Common Project and Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/loneliness-in-america>

³ Chen et al. (October 2021). "Many Latino and Black Households Made Costly Work Adjustments in Spring 2021 to Accommodate COVID-related Child Care Disruptions." National Research Center on Hispanic Families. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/many-latino-and-black-households-made-costly-work-adjustments-in-spring-2021-to-accommodate-covid-related-child-care-disruptions/>

⁴ Lathen, L. (August 2021) "Supporting Parents to Ensure All Wisconsin Children Thrive." Report produced for Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board.

⁵ Jia et al. (October 2021). "National and State Trends in Anxiety and Depression Severity Scores Among Adults During the COVID-19 Panemic-United States, 2020-2021" Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 70, No. 40. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7040e3.htm?s_cid=mm7040e3_w&ACSTrackingID=USC_DC_2145-DM67569&ACSTrackingLabel=10.08.2021%20-%20COVID-19%20Data%20Tracker%20Weekly%20Review&deliveryName=USCDC_2145-DM67569

⁶ Presentation by Lynn Debilzen and Kristin Kappelman to OCMH Access workgroup, Aug. 17, 2021.