

Mental Health

One in 10 children and adolescents are impaired at some level because of mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, but only 20 percent of them are treated for their illnesses (2002). World Health Organization research suggests that by the year 2020, childhood neuropsychiatric diseases will be among the five most common causes of health concern among children.

Nationally, the most common mental health disorders of children and adolescents (National Institute of Mental Health, 2002) include:

- ✓ Anxiety disorders, which may affect as many as 13 percent during a six-month period;
- ✓ Depression, which may affect 6 percent of children and adolescents in a six-month period, with 5 percent having a major depressive disorder;
- ✓ ADHD, which may affect 4 percent of children and adolescents in a six-month period;
- ✓ Eating disorders, which primarily affect adolescent girls and young adult women.

Responses of Tennessee high school students surveyed about suicide and depression mirrored national averages. Thirty percent of Tennessee high school students reported that they had felt sad or hopeless almost daily for two weeks. About 20 percent reported seriously considered attempting suicide, and 14 percent, making a suicide plan during the year before the survey. (MMWR, 2002) Forty-five youth ages 10 to 19 died in Tennessee from suicide, the third leading cause of death for ages 15 to 24, in 2000.

Although a combination of genetic and environmental factors contribute to mental disorders, risk factors for mental health development problems include:

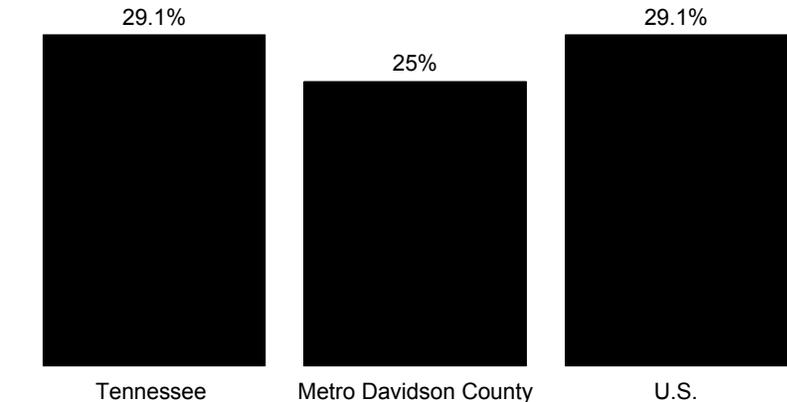
- ✓ Prenatal damage from exposure to alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco;
- ✓ Low birthweight;
- ✓ Difficult temperament or an inherited predisposition to a mental disorder;
- ✓ External risk factors, such as poverty, deprivation, abuse, and neglect;
- ✓ Unsatisfactory relationships;
- ✓ Parental mental health disorder; or
- ✓ Exposure to traumatic events (Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, 1999).

Psychosocial factors contributing to mental health problems include severe parental discord, parental criminality, poor care-giving practices, overcrowding or large family size, economic hardship, and exposure to violence.

Students Who Took Their First Drink of Alcohol Before Age 13

Percentage - Other Than a Few Sips

Metro/Nashville Davidson County, Tennessee, and the U.S. 2001



Source: Metro Davidson County Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001, Tennessee Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001.