

Tennessee’s mental health agency per capita expenditures were the lowest in the nation in 1997, as reported in *Health, United States, 2002*, tied with West Virginia. Only two states experienced less increase in these costs between 1981 and 1997 (Pastor, Makuc, & Xia, 2002). Low income is already a barrier to mental health services. A study reported in 1996 found that children with mental health problems from high-income families were more than three times as likely to visit a doctor for assistance as those from low-income families. The number of visits and the likelihood of seeing a mental health specialist increased with family income (Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, 1997).

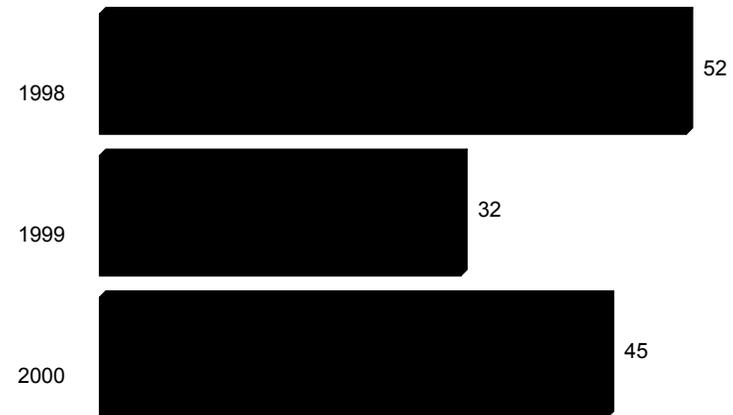
Mental health not only affects an individual’s physical health, it affects the state and nation’s health in many ways. It is estimated that 50 to 75 percent of youth confined by the juvenile justice system have mental disorders, including alcohol and drug abuse, which may co-occur with underlying mental disorders (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2000).

A study of Promising Practices in Children’s Mental Health Systems of Care found that success in treating children’s mental illnesses was enhanced when:

- ✓ Families were fully engaged in services;
- ✓ Providers solicited and addressed families’ priorities;
- ✓ Services addressed the entire family’s needs;
- ✓ Services and evaluation were planned around the families’ strengths and weaknesses;
- ✓ Providers demonstrated genuine caring and were fully accessible;
- ✓ Services were flexible and not limited to the traditional (Worthington, Hernandez, Friedman, & Uzzell, 2001).

Teen Suicide 1998-2000

Ages 10 to 19



Source: Tennessee Department of Health. Note: The Number Represents the State-Wide Total for the 10-14 and 15-19 Age Categories for the Specific Year.

Domestic Violence

In Tennessee, domestic violence is defined as “inflicting, or attempting to inflict physical injury on an adult or minor by other than accidental means, placing an adult or minor in fear of physical harm, physical restraint, and malicious damage to the personal property of the abused party.” In 2001 there were 63,802 cases of domestic violence in Tennessee.

Domestic violence impacts children and youth in their home, social, and dating relationships. National data suggest that children who experience violence in their homes are more likely to have problems with violence in other areas of their lives.

- ✓ Nationally, an average of 28 percent of high school and college students experience dating violence at some point, about the same as the adult population.
- ✓ Forty percent of teen girls ages 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.