Prevention and Treatment of Pediatric Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

March 7, 2019

WHEREAS, both the United States Surgeon General\(^1\) and the Institute of Medicine\(^2\) have documented the high prevalence and early onset of mental health disorders; the shortage of resources to address these disorders; and the compelling public health need to address this important disparity; and

WHEREAS, 2 in 10 children suffer from a mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment\(^1\); yet, in any given year, less than 50% of these children receive mental health services\(^1\); and

WHEREAS, untreated mental health disorders can affect a child’s ability to reach his or her full potential or to learn and develop into a strong, resilient adult and community member\(^3\), and can have serious long-term consequences for the lives of family members and their work productivity as well as for society at large\(^2\); and

WHEREAS, the biological and psychosocial contributions to most major mental health conditions are increasingly understood;\(^4\) the onset mental health conditions typically begin in childhood and adolescence\(^5\), and the most common mental health conditions affecting children have effective treatments;\(^6,7,8,9,10,11\) and

WHEREAS, early identification and intervention strategies are available to prevent suffering and enhance emotional and cognitive development in children and adolescents;\(^13\) and to address the substantial mental health disparities for all children and families;\(^2,13\) and

WHEREAS, early identification and intervention can be beneficial for children and families in promoting mental health and wellbeing, reducing mental disorder symptoms and impairment;\(^2\) and over the long term, reduce the need for costlier interventions;\(^2\); and

WHEREAS, timely access to evidence-based mental health services is impeded by: a severe shortage of trained primary care and mental health professionals, especially pediatricians\(^13\) and child and adolescent psychiatrists;\(^3,14,15,16\) the lack of funding for services,\(^17\) stigma that discourages children and families from seeking services;\(^18\) and disparities related to race, socio-economic status, and geographical location;\(^19\) and

WHEREAS, families and children have uniformly expressed the preference to receive mental health care in the context of care from their primary care provider.\(^20\)
WHEREAS, promotion of best pediatric practices, including early assessment and intervention for mental health disorders; and the development of a work force that is well-prepared to meet the behavioral health needs of children and families throughout our community are consistent with the mission of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago to improve care for all children.

LET IT BE RESOLVED

That Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago will engage in policy and program initiatives to: (i) reduce stigma and increase access to mental health care for youth and families in Chicago, Illinois and the nation; and (ii) increase the readiness and number of pediatric primary care providers and mental health professionals, by developing and disseminating evidence-based, family-centered assessment and treatment services and by encouraging novel funding mechanisms, so that best mental health care practices are cost effective, readily accessible and provide quality treatment for all.

References


