

Children's Committee Framework: Improving Mental Health Outcomes for Children and Youth

Background

In October 2021 the Commission established a Committee on Children's Mental Health. Initiated by former Commission Chair Lynne Ashbeck and former Commissioner Ken Berrick, the Committee was tasked with two goals:

- Strengthen the integration of the Commission's work on child and youth mental health.
- Improve the alignment of the Commission's work with the Governor's Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) and related investments.

The Commission's portfolio includes a range of work related to child and youth mental health, including data reporting and evaluations, grant funding, support for community advocacy, communications, building learning collaboratives, innovation investments, community engagement, and more. The Committee is tasked with enhancing opportunities to connect work across the Commission's portfolio to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its work and improve outcomes for children and youth.

The CYBHI is a \$4.7 billion investment in reimagining mental health and emotional well-being for all children, youth, and families by delivering equitable, appropriate, timely, and accessible behavioral health services and supports from prevention to treatment to recovery. Key components of the CYBHI consist of community engagement and partnerships across a variety of sectors and organizations. The Commission's work on the Mental Health Student Services Act is a component of the CYBHI and the Commission will receive approximately \$43 million to support the scaling of evidence-based practices, including community defined practices. The Committee is charged with ensuring the Commission's work fully supports the larger Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative.

Committee Kick-Off

In May of 2022, Commission Chair Mara Madrigal-Weiss convened the first meeting of the Committee on Children's Mental Health, also referred to as the Children's Committee. Participants discussed the Committee's role and opportunities for leveraging the Commission's current efforts to support children and youth mental health. The Committee heard from the public on barriers and opportunities to enhancing programs and services for these populations.

Participants stated that the Commission's work on children's mental health is fragmented and lacks an overarching strategy. In the absence of such a strategy, it is difficult to quantify and measure children's wellbeing and determine pathways to seamless system integration. It was also mentioned that although the CYBHI is a statewide attempt to improve children's mental health, the weight falls heavily at the local level with county behavioral health departments being primarily responsible for programs and services implementation. While there are models

of best practices in pockets throughout the State, these programs are often siloed, and lessons learned are not being shared across counties, suggesting a need for county-to-county learning, and sharing of best practices.

Additionally, many children's mental health programs and services are provided in isolation from the context in which children live, play, and learn. Committee members and the public emphasized the importance of examining children's mental health outcomes across race, culture, and socioeconomic status. Support for children must address the social determinants of mental health and disparities.

Committee members emphasized the importance of creating programs that are integrated into a comprehensive and sustainable continuum of services. Many grant-funded programs are time-limited, and there is a need to build financial models that guarantee continuity of services once grant funding ends.

Finally, meeting participants shared that the traditional children's mental health system is more reactive than proactive and is currently not early intervention focused. Few programs address the needs of very young children and their families. Meeting participants stressed a need for a strategy focused on maternal mental health and children ages zero to five (0-5).

Opportunities

While the Commission currently engages in many activities that support children and youth, the Committee identified areas for these activities to be more effectively integrated. Additionally, the Commission has authority to allocate significant funds for school mental health services, youth drop-in programs, crisis prevention and response, and early psychosis intervention.

With an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, the Committee can help the Commission spotlight opportunities to promote health and wellbeing for all children and identify priorities and strategies to support children ages zero to five, as well as maternal mental health. Strategies may include those that uplift families in their communities.

Importantly, by integrating the Commission's data and policy work with decisions around resource allocation and grant funding opportunities, the Committee can guide data-driven decision-making for children and youth.

Opportunities to improve mental wellbeing for all children and youth include identifying disparities and striving for health equity, creating learning communities and infrastructure to share best practices, and identifying solutions to sustain and scale programs that are successful.

Communication and engagement strategies are essential to integrating the Commission's work on children's mental health and supporting the CYHBI. Strategies to explore the needs and solutions for children's mental health may include site-visits, advocacy from community partners, and sponsoring media campaigns.

Core Values

As shared by Committee members and reflected in public comments, the following values should drive the work of the Committee:

Prioritizing Prevention

- Emphasize health promotion and wellbeing
- Start early: 0-5 and maternal mental health

Data-Driven Approaches

- Data informs decisions for resource allocation
- Research and evaluation guides priorities

Building Capacity

- Improve strategies to prioritize health equity
- Share best practices
- Facilitate learning collaboratives
- Identify solutions for sustainability

Expanding Awareness

- Communicate priorities
- Engage partners via site visits, advocacy, and media

Proposed Committee Activities

The Commission has an array of tools and projects that can be marshalled to improve mental health outcomes for children and youth, including grant-making activities, community advocacy, policy projects, evaluations, data sharing, convenings, communications and more. Committee members urged better integration and leveraging of these efforts to support outcomes for children and youth.

The following graphic reflects the Commission's primary areas of work:



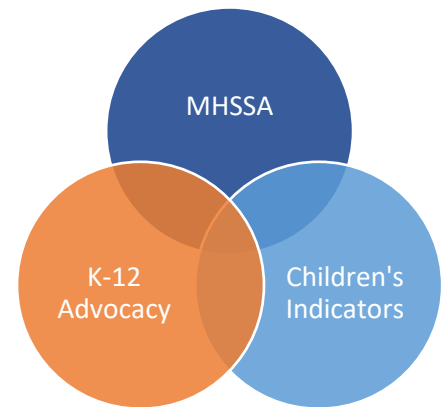
Although not an exhaustive list of Commission activities, the following items reflect high-priority opportunities that can be supported by the Children’s Committee, with attention on improving integration across the Commission’s work and coordination and support for the Governor’s Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative:

CURRENT	EMERGENT	POTENTIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 Advocacy Dollars (11/8) • Allocate Mental Health Wellness Act funds to support 0-5 populations (11/8) • PEI Policy Project (TBD) • Determine metrics for School Mental Health (TBD) • TBD • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Mental Health Convening • Firearm Violence Prevention • Identify opportunities for Innovation Investments • Explore new Learning Collaboratives • Prioritize uses of the CYBHI Evidence-Based Practice funds • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss program review opportunities to focus on children’s mental health • TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD

Integration of the Commission’s Work

Consistent with the core values identified above, integration of the Commission’s work would use data and indicators to prioritize the Commission’s grant investments and shape the Commission’s related work to support improved outcomes through community-based opportunities, such as how innovation and Commission grant funding proposals are developed and approved. The Committee can shape these decisions by guiding the Commission’s work to identify indicators for children’s well-being.

Over time, the Committee will allow the Commission to ensure that its entire portfolio is aligned and integrated to best support improved outcomes and transformational change for California’s children’s mental health system.



Moving Forward

The Children’s Committee is tentatively scheduled to convene on a quarterly or as-needed basis as determined by the Committee Chair.