

Better Futures

FALL 2022 PUBLICATION OF



casa de los niños

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Awareness

Building Healthier Families for a Stronger Community

By focusing on the whole family, the services provided by Casa de los Niños help everyone become stronger, more resilient, and able to thrive. There is a tremendous need for our services now more than ever.

Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Being mentally healthy in childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social and coping skills, and helps us stay resilient when we face challenging situations. Children's mental health is strengthened by supportive relationships and environments, but this can be put at risk by stress and negative experiences at home and school.

Poor mental health among children continues to be a sizeable public health concern, especially since COVID-19. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety among children of all ages, and symptoms related to depression among adolescents, are

the most common concerns. More information on positive indicators of mental health, such as emotional well-being and resilience is needed to truly understand children's mental health.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 to 24.

Prevention takes far fewer resources than intervention and treatment. A year of in-home visits and parent education provided by Casa de los Niños costs \$5,000 while a year of foster care costs about \$35,000. Working on prevention and helping build strong families is a much more cost-effective way to stop mental health problems before they occur.



Helping Kids. Healing Families.

Over the last 5 years, Casa de los Niños has worked with focused intent to create in-home programs that help more than 8,000 families each year, right where they live... providing parents with resources and skills so they can keep children home, in a safe and healthy environment.

The good news is... the results of this work are being realized! More children are able to stay in their homes, and families are able to stay together. We are enormously grateful to the Tucson community for the support that has enabled us to move beyond housing kids in shelters to keeping them in their own homes safely, or in a caring and nurturing foster home.

Casa de los Niños focuses a large part of our efforts on the mental and behavioral health needs of kids. By providing therapy, psychiatric treatment, medicine management

and case management, we are meeting a crucial need for kids that can dramatically change the course their life will take. It is well understood that untreated psychiatric disorders and mental health issues result in poor, and even traumatic, outcomes. While this has become a critical need in our community, as we witness more families struggling with the impact of poverty, Casa de los Niños remains committed responding to these urgent needs with dynamic mental health treatment resources for all families.

Together, we continue to work to ensure kids grow up in safe and stable homes.

Casa de los Niños Behavioral Health Services

Do you have a child or young adult in your life who needs someone to talk to?

We have therapists with multiple specializations, including:

- 0-5 years old
- Autism
- Special needs
- Transitioning youth
- Depression/anxiety
- Victims of domestic and/or family violence
- Justice-involved youth

We help kids and families to work through emotional and behavioral challenges, the effects of trauma, victims of violence...we are here to help!

To schedule an appointment or to get more information, call us at 520.881.1292 and select option 2.

The Importance of Working With the Whole Family

Suicide is a serious public health problem that has lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities. People who have experienced violence, including adverse childhood experiences, such as physical abuse, bullying, or sexual violence, have a higher suicide risk. Having access to health care services, a support network, and community resources can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Youth who experience depression are more likely to attempt suicide. Their symptoms may include sadness, irritability, hopelessness, isolation, or boredom. Other mental health conditions that may increase the risk of suicide, can include mood disorders, eating disorders, and substance use. It is important that parents and community members understand the warning signs, risk factors, and symptoms.

Our staff works with parents, grandparents, caregivers, and schools to recognize the symptoms to watch out for, assess the risk factors and seek the appropriate treatment plan.

Youth are screened for adverse childhood experiences, depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance use upon intake and throughout the course of treatment. The goal is to prevent suicide by identifying risk factors and creating a safe space for the youth to openly share their thoughts and feelings. Our therapy and skill-building services promote resiliency, healthy coping tools, and problem-solving skills to prevent suicide among school-aged children and youth.

You are your child's best advocate.

Trust your feelings, be confident, and take action.

Watch for These Warning Signs

If a child you know exhibits these behaviors, it may indicate it's time to seek professional help:

- **Sudden overwhelming fear** for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing.
- **Severe mood swings** that cause problems in relationships.
- **Drastic changes** in behavior, personality or sleeping habits.
- **Extreme difficulty in concentrating** or staying still that can lead to failure in school.

The mental health and well-being of children and young adults is the foundation of the work of Casa de los Niños, and we are ready to help!

You can reach the Behavioral Health Service office at 520.881.1292, select option 2.

Suicidal Ideation and Thoughts of Self-Harm Reach a New High

Suicidal/self-harm thinking, especially among young people, was an epidemic in 2020 and 2021. Overall, 39% of individuals in the U.S. who were screened for depression reported frequent suicidal ideation (defined as more than half or nearly every day of the previous two weeks) in 2021. This was 8% higher than the average rate of suicidal ideation in 2019 and 2% higher than the rate in 2020.

Source: Mental Health America

HELPFUL TIP

Experts report that asking the youth about suicide will not "put the idea into their heads." In fact, it could open the door to an honest conversation about their mental health.



A Psychiatrist's Perspective on Youth Mental Health

Interview with Casa de los Niños' Dr. Howard Lin

Recently, Amy Lester, VP of Development and Public Relations, sat down and had a conversation with Dr. Lin, a Behavioral Health Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist at Casa de los Niños about the work that he does with kids and families.

How long have you been at Casa de los Niños?

"Wow let's see. I started by doing my training in Tucson through the University of Arizona. I guess that was a little over 10 years ago."

What keeps you at Casa de los Niños?

"I love the mission. Also, the incredible staff that work here and their commitment to our kids and families. Casa de los Niños has been the cornerstone of the community for almost 50 years, and I am honored to be a part of it."



What changes are you and other psychiatrists seeing in children with mental health issues?

"Unfortunately, children with mental health issues have gotten more severe than when I first started. There has been an increase in depression, anxiety and behavioral problems."

How has COVID-19 impacted that?

"The isolation that COVID created, as well as all of the losses from people dying from COVID, have been incredibly detrimental to children. For example, we work with some families who have three generations of family members living under one roof and two of those generations experienced a death from COVID. This is very hard on a family and even harder on the children."

Through COVID, I was very proud of how Casa de los Niños was able to pivot so quickly to keep us connected with our kids and families. I was able to keep seeing patients through telehealth, provide medication management, and do therapy over the computer and phone. That being said, I am really enjoying seeing my patients in person again. It is incredible how much everyone has grown!"

When should parents look for help for their child and where should they start?

"Here's a list of things to look for:

- Child appears to be struggling more
- Child is sleeping more or sleeping less
- Child is isolating themselves
- Appetite increases or decreases
- Has thoughts of self harm

If parents are seeing these things in their child, it is important for them to reach out to their primary care provider. The primary care provider will make the appropriate referral for the parents."

Is there anything else you would like to add?

"Growing up is very different in today's day and age. Kids have to deal with many more things than we did when we grew up. All parents need a helping hand every now and then. I encourage parents to reach out when they need help. I really appreciate how Casa de los Niños engages parents/caregivers and encourages their participation in the process. When we first meet a family we come from a place of compassion, empathy, and acceptance. When we are able to support all members of the family, it is then when we can have a significant impact on the child."

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

We can all help prevent suicide. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress. Lifeline can also provide help in prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, as well as best practice advisories for professionals in the United States.

988 is now active across the United States. This new, shorter phone number will make it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services.



988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

Please note: The previous 1-800-273-TALK (8255) number will continue to function indefinitely.

Care Coordinators Positively Impact Lives on a Daily Basis



One of our Casa de los Niños' Care Coordinators, Taylor Mason, shares an impactful story of her time working with one of her clients! Taylor has been working with a client and their family for over two years. When Taylor first started working with the family, the child was 11 years old and was struggling with substance use, sexual abuse, parental incarceration, suicidal ideation, fire starting and animal cruelty. Throughout the course of

the two years they worked together, the child had to move to several different placements, and even spent some time in a detention center due to criminal activity.

Many changes happened in this child's life during this period of time, and Casa de los Niños remained a constant positive influence, providing high-quality services and working diligently with the child and their family to make a positive change in the course of this child's life.

Through intensive case management, family/individual therapy, and medicine management services at Casa de los Niños, we are now seeing many positive changes in the life of this child and their family. They are back living with mom and her siblings, they are stable, doing terrific in school, advocating for themselves and she has even begun mentoring her young sibling! The family is happy with the positive outcome they've

had since starting to receive services from Casa de los Niños.

"It wasn't easy, but they persevered and are doing tremendous today."

Taylor can see the child now has better coping skills and is ready to continue making positive changes in their life. Taylor, and all of us at Casa de los Niños, are proud of the work the child and the family have done during this process.



Anna Richards A Day In The Life of a Care Coordinator

My job consists of coordinating behavioral health services for children who have complex psychosocial needs, and I manage 60+ cases at any given time. I always want to ensure that I assess and understand my client's goals and needs. I share those goals and needs between service providers, clients, and parents to collaborate as a team to achieve the set objectives in an effective manner. On a typical workday, I have a wide range of different responsibilities; I coordinate services and put families in touch with added resources in the community. I encourage clients, parents and guardians to strive to meet their goals and I always enjoy providing the services and support as needed.

A typical day for me is as follows: To start my day, I am off to a home visit for a family that the Department of Child Safety (DCS) referred to us. I pay the home a visit and administer a developmental screening and happily report back to DCS that the child is developmentally on track. Next, I am off to an elementary school to help advocate for one of the kids under my care to receive an autism screening, as this screening is needed for the child to be able to access services. After that, I am headed to a Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) meeting, to provide updates on another client, I provide information to the Board on how the child is doing, what services they are receiving, as this is reported to the court every six months while the child remains in out-of-home care. In the afternoon, I will facilitate a Child Family Team (CFT) meeting between the parents, placement, DCS representative and all the other service providers that are involved in this case. Getting everyone in the same room and on the same page can be challenging at times, but it is very important for the child's success.

At the end of the day, I will complete all the case notes on each family and make any referrals my families needed for the day. These referrals can be for individual/family therapy services, in-home services, psychological and psychiatric evaluations, and respite services. I also connect parents, foster parents and kinship placements to additional community resources, such as grief counseling, food banks, assistance with paying utility bills, housing referrals, diaper bank, early intervention services, etc.

As COVID restrictions continue to relax, care coordinators are returning to provide in-person services and families are beginning to feel more comfortable with having us

provide services in the home. Meeting with families in the home has had a positive impact as we engage and build a rapport with clients, parents, and guardians.

I genuinely enjoy all the aspects of my job and providing positive, quality service. Here at Casa de Niños, we all work together as a team to provide the best quality care for our clients and their families.



Program Highlight Transitional Age Youth

Jennifer Key, Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisor



The Transitional Age Youth (TAY) program at Casa de los Niños offers an array of mental health and supportive services for youth who are preparing for adulthood. While some individuals adapt well as they transition into adulthood, others experience

challenges such as those youths who have mental health concerns. The young adult along with identified family members, caregivers or guardians will actively participate in the treatment planning processes throughout this transitional period.

Transitions Make us Stronger

Ruben Aroz, Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisor

The end of summer and the beginning of Fall, transitions take on the faces of anxiety, depression, and dysregulation. Change can be viewed with dread or with possibilities yet to be understood or unwrapped. As parents, guardians, and caregivers, the added need to provide supervision, guidance, direction, and support to our children rises to become a most challenging task.

A measure of comfort comes from the fact that this is a task that is addressed year in and year out. All are affected by the changes and social-economic upheavals that permeate our life experience. Too often we hear of problems like substance abuse, crime, and the traumatic effects of adverse life experiences. How is it affecting our children's perception and need for shelter, nurturance, and stability to grow, learn, and recreate. We often question whether there is anything we can do? And the answer is a resounding 'Yes!'

I truly believe that the best element of a plan is simplicity. It is in this way that we can focus on the skills and resources we all possess by actively listening, using our voice, and calmly responding to our children. Practice purposefully placing your awareness of the present moment and calmly acknowledging the needs of your child. Listen with your ears, eyes, and your whole being to their 'voice.' Understand that your child needs to be loved and to love, to feel safe and secure, validation of who they are, confidence and understanding that 'life is hard, but they can do hard things.' In this way, you can address those intrusive topics that challenge and instill fear which leads to anxiety, depression, and dysregulation. By making an authentic connection with your child, you put yourself in a position to best support them and address the inevitable transitions that come their way.

(TAY) Program

The TAY program is designed to provide goal-oriented, individualized support to persons aged 16 to 22. This program provides youth with the needed skills to age out of children's behavioral health services or assists the youth with a warm handoff to access services within the adult behavioral health network.

TAY services include but are not limited to: Home and life management, Social skills, Vocational support, Health and wellness, and Financial literacy.

As the transition to adulthood can be a challenging time for all, we help our youth to achieve their own unique goals, whether that is obtaining a job, completing high school, opening a bank account, or developing positive social patterns, we actively take part to help in this time of change!

Each youth will be assigned a TAY care coordinator to assist them in developing a treatment plan with individualized goals and services.



THE MISSION of Casa de los Niños
is to promote
CHILD WELL-BEING and
FAMILY STABILITY in our community.

the
voice
for change
advocacy
children



casa de los niños

CHANGING LIVES FOR GENERATIONS

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FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS SELF-EXPRESSION BAGS

Art supplies, journals, diaries, pens, sketchbooks.



GIFT CARDS

Target, Wal-Mart, Fry's, Safeway, Basha's, TJ Maxx, Amazon, Kohl's, Old Navy and others will help a family in need immensely.

For more information and tips, please contact Kimberly Gutierrez at kgutierrez@casadelosninos.org.

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