

Access to mental health care lacking for children, teens across the US

April 2 2013

Everyday, news reports detail the impact of the deficiencies in the nation's mental health care services. Even more startling, a survey from the University of Michigan reveals that many adults across the U.S. believe children and teens have extremely limited or no access to appropriate mental health care services.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation commissioned the National Voices Project to facilitate a five year study to gauge opportunities available for children and teens at the local level in communities across the U.S. Officials at the National Voices Project based their study on the perceptions held by adults who work and volunteer on behalf of children day-to-day.

"The adults in the National Voices Project survey work or volunteer on behalf of kids. These are the adults who are perhaps best positioned to refer children and teens to the healthcare services they need," says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the National Voices Project, associate professor of Pediatrics and [Communicable Diseases](#) at the University of Michigan Medical School and associate professor of Public Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Survey participants were asked how much availability there is in their communities for children and teens to receive healthcare services. More than half of all respondents note that there is "lots of availability" for teens to have hospital care (55%) and [primary care](#) (56%) in their communities, but across all healthcare services, only 30% of respondents

reported "lots of availability" for [mental health care](#). Healthcare availability for children was very similar.

"These findings indicate low availability of mental health care for children and teens in the majority of communities across the U.S.," says Davis. "Even in communities where there are lots of opportunities for children and teens to get primary care or hospital care, access to mental health care is lacking."

In addition, in communities where [respondents](#) perceived racial/ethnic inequities, they consistently reported less access to all [healthcare services](#), including mental health, especially for teens.

The full survey shows that where there are perceived inequities at the community level there are also perceptions of diminished opportunities for young children and teens in the domains of nutrition, health, and healthcare.

More information: To read the full report, please visit: [nationalvoicesproject.org/amer ... ess-healthcare-teens](https://nationalvoicesproject.org/amer...ess-healthcare-teens)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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