

# Rural areas have fewer mental health services for young people

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Very rural areas in the United States have fewer mental health services for young people, yet that's where the help is needed the most, says a study led by Janessa Graves of the Washington State University College

of Nursing, published last week in *JAMA Network Open*.

Previous studies have shown that the suicide rate among young people in rural areas is higher than for urban youth and is also growing faster, said Graves, associate professor and assistant dean for undergraduate and community research.

Yet by one measure, using ZIP Codes, only 3.9 percent of rural areas have a mental health facility that serves young people, the study found, compared with 12.1 percent of urban (metropolitan) and 15 percent of small-town ZIP Code Tabulation Areas.

Measured by county type, 63.7 percent of all counties had a mental health facility serving [young people](#), while only 29.8 percent of "highly rural" counties did.

"Youth mental health is something that seems to be getting worse, not better, because of COVID-19," said Graves. "We really need these resources to serve these kids."

While Graves' study focused on suicide prevention services offered in mental health facilities, "even less intensive services like school mental health therapists are lacking in [rural areas](#)," she said.

Concluded the study, "Given the higher rates of suicide deaths among rural youth, it is imperative that the distribution of and access to [mental health services](#) correspond to [community needs](#)."

**More information:** Janessa M. Graves et al, Association of Rurality With Availability of Youth Mental Health Facilities With Suicide Prevention Services in the US, *JAMA Network Open* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.21471](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.21471)

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