



## Children's Advocacy

ALLIANCE

an independent voice  
for Nevada's children

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Nevada Children's Mental Health Continues to be Last in the Nation**

*Nevada receives an overall D+ for Children's Mental Health*

**LAS VEGAS (October 6, 2021)** According to the *Nevada Children's Mental Health* report, the state continues to rank last in providing mental health resources for children, with an overall grade of D+. The report was developed by the Children's Advocacy Alliance's Serrina Nasrollahi, public health intern from UNLV, and Dr. Tara C. Raines.

The report focused on nine children's mental health indicators and highlighted concerns over disparities that impact children and families to receive help or support. The report also provides state recommendations to improve the overall grades of each mental health indicator.

The [\*Nevada Children's Mental Health\*](#) report's key findings focused on the following children's mental health indicators: Depression, adolescent substance use disorders, developmental disorders, suicide, infant and early learning childhood mental health, emotional disturbance, juvenile justice, access to mental/ behavioral care and disparities.

"This report highlights and reiterates what we know: Access to quality mental health care for infants, children and adolescents in Nevada is lacking. Our findings highlight the need to fortify our training pipeline and encourage mental health professionals to practice in Nevada," said Dr. Raines, KIDS Count Initiatives director of the Children's Advocacy Alliance.

Alarming data among the report's many outcomes included Nevada ranking 43rd nationally in 2020 and 2021 in children identified as having emotional disturbance, earning Nevada a failing grade. Data research reveals that Nevada received an F+ grade in children receiving mental and behavioral care. Additionally, according to Mental Health America, Nevada is ranked as the worst state in the nation with an estimated 71 percent of youth who have experienced major depressive episodes, and not received any type of mental health treatment service.

The Children's Advocacy Alliance believes Nevada's children deserve better. Although the state has made progress, it still needs more work to provide better services and equitable access for children and their families to access and utilize these supports.

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## **New CAA Report Gives Nevada a D+/Page 2**

“Investing in strong mental health resources and access to high-quality practitioners needs to be our number one priority. Nevada's children are our future, and their well-being is of vital importance to our community. It is our responsibility to help them heal from this pandemic and navigate the world as it rapidly changes around them,” said Nevada State Assembly Member, Cameron "C.H." Miller.

The report includes six specific state recommendations that would help improve Nevada’s grades, including:

### **1. Increase access to child mental and behavioral health services**

- Improve the spectrum of wrap-around services available in Nevada
- Policymakers should focus on funding and supporting these facilities
- Increase the resources (facilities, programs, funding, etc.) available to those children with severe mental health disorders, as these resources are almost non-existent within the community.

### **2. Increase the number of licensed child mental health professionals in the community**

- Increase the number and diversity of training programs (e.g., residencies, internships and postdoctoral fellowships) for infant, early childhood, child and adolescent mental and behavioral health providers and clinical professionals
- Develop and implement a plan to incentivize child mental and behavioral health practitioners through tuition assistantships, paid internships/post-doctoral fellowships and student loan forgiveness programs in rural and high-needs areas.

### **3. Provide universal screening for behavioral and emotional health throughout childhood**

- Prioritize early intervention starting in infancy, and continuing throughout childhood to prevent the onset and worsening of behavioral and emotional mental health conditions
- Utilize pediatric offices and child care facilities for screening that will support identification of behavioral and emotional risk in infancy and early childhood.
- Engage local communities, child care centers and schools with the universal screening process to target children of all ages.

### **4. Examine implicit bias and school discipline practices**

- Encourage positive, restorative and healing-centered approaches to mitigate student emotional distress.

### **5. Place a focus on parent education and developing family support programs within the community**

### **6. Ensure that children and families have access to health care coverage that provides them the coverage they need to obtain mental and behavioral health treatment and services**

- Provide health care coverage that offers a wider range of mental health supports to children and their families.

**About the Children's Advocacy Alliance**

The Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) is a community-based nonprofit organization that advocates for policy changes that benefit Nevada's children and families by researching and utilizing current data, and promoting evidence-based policies to ensure that every child has a chance to thrive. CAA engages the community by bringing people together to address challenges and opportunities around children's issues, to leverage collective strength toward improving the systems that support the well-being of Nevada's children. For more information, visit [www.caanv.org](http://www.caanv.org).

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