

# Public Input on the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant

*Mental and Behavioral Health Needs of the Population  
in the time of COVID.*

*October 2020*

# Overview – Ten Priorities, 2020 to 2025

1. Cardiovascular disease among women of childbearing age.
2. Premature birth.
3. Infant Safe Sleep.
4. **Child Abuse** prevention.
5. Access to preventive oral healthcare services for children.
6. Motor vehicle crashes among adolescents.
7. Sexually transmitted diseases among youth.
8. **Youth Suicide.**
9. **Behavioral and mental health** in school for children and youth with special health care needs.
10. Improved access to and utilization of **mental and behavioral health** services by MCH populations.

# Title V Updates

*“How is the COVID-19 pandemic impacting each priority in your community?”*

## Child Health Domain:

In response to the question on **Child Abuse and Neglect**, a total of forty-seven comments were received, virtually all expressing concern COVID-19 has been placing children at greater risk of abuse and neglect due to: parental stress (lack of resources, frustration, anxiety), lack of school oversight on the wellbeing of each child, isolation, and other barriers to identifying cases. The context of COVID stressors on families that gave rise to a suggestion of reaching out to families with coping and referral resources at food distribution sites.

With regard to **Access to Preventive Oral Healthcare**, thirty-seven comments were received about impacts of COVID, the majority pointing to disrupted access to dentists and dental care.



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## **Adolescent Health Domain:**

The most responses in this domain, thirty-four, were on the topic of **Suicide**. Numerous comments noted effects of isolation including depression. The dismantling of support systems including friends and school networks, was also frequently noted. Respondents commented on increased unstructured free time (boredom), exposure to mental health issues at home including very stressed parents, difficulties accessing mental health services were also named. A quote retrieved from a respondent:

*“The mental health impacts of COVID will be felt for years. Young people undertaking major life steps (graduation, high school, first job) are very subject to disruption. Combined with grief, stress, and uncertainty, the outlook for mental wellbeing of young people is not good.”*



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## **CYSHCN Domain:**

In response to this question about the priority of **Mental and Behavioral Health in School**, respondents focused heavily on school in forty comments about the school closures due to COVID leaving CYSHCN and families without supports, therapies, respite, and education. In addition, numerous comments related to the emotional and mental stresses of pandemic on all families, and how these might even be more intense for families with CYSHCN. More specifically, a respondent reflected, *“Schools are a mess, and the anxiety factor as well as social impacts from isolation from peers during critical development in childhood years will be felt for a long time.”*



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## Cross-Cutting Domain:

In response to this question on the priority of **Improving Access to and Utilization of Mental and Behavioral Health Services** among MCH Populations, respondents had many observations about the impact of COVID-related closures on access to care, either due to closed provider offices, anxiety related to potential COVID exposures, or school closures resulting in fewer interactions with helping adults. At the same time, comments reflected perceptions of greatly increased need for mental health services. And while telehealth in some ways may assist people to access care, not all are comfortable or capable with telehealth as a means to receive services.



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