

## **Week 3 Discussion: Rates of Depression and Anxiety in Children**

### **Initial Post**

*Dr. Morgan and Class,*

**Identify at least two resources that are needed to address the mental health needs of the pediatric population.**

One resource that is needed to address pediatric mental health needs is more providers. The lack of mental health providers, specifically child and adolescent providers, across the nation is a barrier for patients (Bartek et al., 2021). It is essential to recognize that telehealth has become increasingly popular since Covid-19. Still, not all mental health providers may be accepting new patients because of the high quantity of patients that they are already caring for. The need for more pediatric mental health providers has been an ongoing issue even before COVID-19, but the community saw the need during and after COVID-19 (Binagwaho & Senga, 2021). As long as there are patients in search of a mental health provider but unable to find one, it proves that there is a need for more mental health providers.

A second resource needed to address pediatric mental health needs is funding. Many low-income families cannot afford mental health care due to funding. The patients, providers, and community need to advocate for increased adequate reimbursement of mental health services so that the patient pays less (Bartek et al., 2021). To advocate for adequate reimbursement, there needs to be increased education and awareness amongst the community. Child and adolescent mental health providers working in low-income areas have the least financial support to provide care (Binagwaho & Senga, 2021). Funding can be provided at various levels with government programs like Medicaid. Other funding programs may be needed at local or state levels to help the pediatric population increase access to mental health care.

**Describe one strategy at the local, state, national, or international levels to expand access to care.**

A state program has been spreading across the United States and is still reaching out to make an effort to be a part of all 50 states. This program is the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program (PMHCA). Essentially, this program offers pediatric providers in all settings with consultation, referrals, training, and resources to help provide the pediatric population with mental and behavioral health services (HRSA, 2024). It is essential to provide care to the pediatric population through primary care, emergency medicine, and other outpatient settings. Many primary care providers try to provide mental health care but are limited due to lack of education. Many pediatric populations may only see their primary or emergency care providers because that is often what Medicaid services will cover. So, these providers need to be ready to provide care in case the patients do not have access to mental health provider specialists due to the lack of funding.

When providers use this PMHCA program, it provides better screening, identification, treatment, and emergent referrals for children and adolescents (HRSA, 2024). This service increases the provider's knowledge and expands mental and behavioral health services to the child and