



Advocating for behavioral health supports in schools

The crisis in child mental health is real. In 2021, The American Academy of Pediatrics and other leaders in child health declared a National State of Emergency in child and adolescent mental health. And The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on youth mental health, calling for urgent action to address this public health crisis.

The facts are startling:

- In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified suicide as the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 20-34.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that 1 in 6 youth (ages 6 to 17) across the U.S. have a serious mental illness, yet very few receive mental health care.
- Nearly 40% of Massachusetts high school students who completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2021 reported profound feelings of sadness and hopelessness, up from 34% in 2019.

Nowhere is the crisis in child mental health more evident than in schools where students' mental health impacts their ability to focus, complete assignments, follow classroom rules, make friends, engage in activities, and ultimately to graduate.¹ In addition, lowered academic achievement and mental health conditions can each lead to lifelong effects including engagement in high risk behaviors, development of serious health conditions, higher rates of poverty, and shortened life span of ten or more years.

The impact on school personnel is also significant. Schools are not fully staffed to meet the level of behavioral health needs among their students and the teachers and administrators who must

shoulder the burden have not been adequately trained, supervised, or supported to take it on. The resulting stress and burnout has been attributed to record high rates of turnover, especially in high need districts.

There is broad consensus that one of the most promising methods of bridging the gap in services for young people is to meet them where they are by providing behavioral health services and supports within schools.²

In response, MSPCC, through its leadership role in the Children's Mental Health Campaign, is focused on advancing policies and securing resources to enable all students to access behavioral health promotion, prevention and intervention services and supports.

Among our primary legislative initiatives is H.1979 *An Act establishing a child and adolescent behavioral health implementation coordinating council*, filed by Representative Marjorie Decker. This bill would require the Commonwealth to commit to developing a 3-year plan to rapidly and equitably implement behavioral health services in every school district. It also establishes a diverse panel of experts to advise that process. Understanding that implementing this plan will require financial resources, we are also working on bills and budget proposals to ensure that districts have the staffing and resources they need.

These are important first steps and we are hard at work to advance them with the Administration and Legislature but there is much to be done. To add your voice to our advocacy, go to www.mspcc.org and click on Get Involved.

inspired



**Massachusetts Society
for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Children**

¹ Now Is The Time - Technical Assistance (NITT-TA) Center, n.d.

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. 2021



GIVE THE CHILDREN OF MSPCC A VERY SPECIAL HOLIDAY SEASON!

Each year, MSPCC brings holiday joy and gifts into the homes of hundreds of children and families receiving MSPCC services. **This year, we are looking to provide holiday gifts to more than 500 children throughout Massachusetts.**

You can help make a difference for children in need this holiday season! MSPCC will be providing gift cards so that our parents and program staff can purchase items on children's wish lists on your behalf. Visit mspcc.org/holidays or scan the QR code below to donate and bring holiday joy to MSPCC's children. Your support could fund:



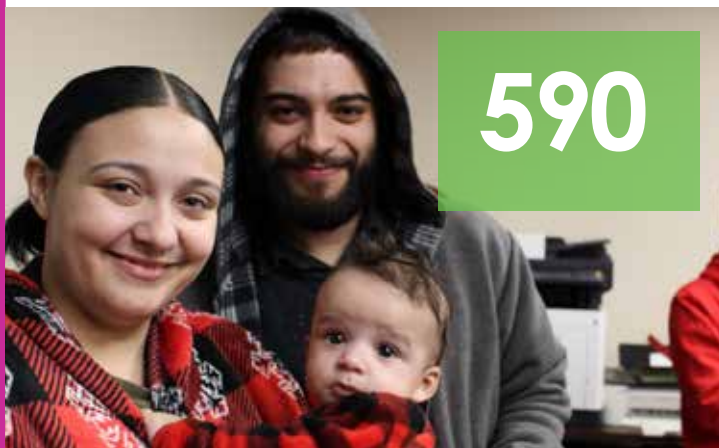
- a toy for a child for \$25
- two toys for a child for \$50
- a complete holiday wishlist for a child for \$100
- a complete holiday wishlist for a family for \$500



Thanks to your support, last year...

12,186

children, youth, and families received
critical services from MSPCC.



590

590 young, first-time parents learned to create stable, nurturing environments for their children through Healthy Families, a program of the Children's Trust.

8,738 foster, kinship, and adoptive parents participated in trainings, support groups, and/or coaching to better understand and respond to the needs of children in their care, victimized by abuse or neglect.

8,738



2,652 families learned new skills to support their children's needs through our mental health services, including through therapeutic mentors, family supports training, and many more clinical programs.



2,652

Meet MSPCC's Young Professional Board Leadership Team!

It's an exciting time for MSPCC's Young Professional Board! In July 2023, the YPB implemented a Leadership Team of passionate young professionals to grow and enhance the Young Professional Board to broaden support for MSPCC's mission. Learn more about the Young Professional Board at: mspcc.org/ypb

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From the Desk of
Nancy Allen Scannell

Dear Friends,

Growing up in Massachusetts, fall has always been my favorite time of year. The warm days and cool evenings, the sight of children in backpacks climbing into bright yellow buses while beautifully colored leaves float to the ground are signals that the season of exciting change has begun.

As a policy advocate, fall is energizing. By mid fall, work is in high gear and the days are full and productive as we strive to advance priority initiatives. For many children, this is also a fun and lively time of year. They have settled into their new grade in school, are hanging out with old and new friends, and participating in afterschool activities.

For other kids, however, the experience of fall and the return to school is highly stressful, over time causing the spiraling of academic and social struggles and deepening levels of anxiety, depression and feelings of isolation. The impact is serious, and because succeeding in school is linked to a range of health, economic, and relational outcomes, it can have lifelong impact.

For many of these students, school is the primary place where they can seek and receive effective services and supports to address an emerging or ongoing mental health concern. That is if their school has the staffing and partnerships to provide that support. But, the reality is most schools do not.

This is why MSPCC has made the emotional well-being of children, from their first years in early education and care programs through high school, a top priority in our advocacy agenda and in child and family services programming. All children deserve to have an engaging and rewarding school experience and with the right support they can.

As fall draws to a close and the season of giving begins, please accept my deepest gratitude for your support of our work. Through your partnership and generosity, each day we have the privilege of giving children the support they need to thrive in school, at home, and in their communities.

With heartfelt thanks,

Nancy Allen Scannell
Executive Director

Back-to-school for kids in foster care

In August, MSPCC's Encompass and Kid's Net programs hosted a fun-filled back-to-school event for more than 70 foster families in Central Massachusetts.

Children's faces lit up as they received their backpacks filled with essential school supplies, setting them up for a successful academic year. The kids enjoyed dinner, crafts, and outdoor activities, and parents and caregivers had the opportunity to connect with resources and other foster families in their community.





Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

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Main Office

125 Hartwell Avenue
Lexington, MA 02421
781.861.0890

Boston

2010 Columbus Avenue, Floor 2
Boston, MA 02119
617.983.5800

Holyoke

9 Sullivan Road
Holyoke, MA 01040
413.532.9446

Lawrence

15 Union Street
Building E, Suite 115
Lawrence, MA 01840
978.682.9222

Lowell

151 Warren Street
Lowell, MA 01852
978.937.3087

New Bedford

1 Welby Road
New Bedford, MA 02745
508.767.3000

Worcester

108 Belmont Street
Worcester, MA 01602
508.753.2967

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THANKSGIVING DRIVE

Each November, MSPCC provides a Thanksgiving feast to more than 200 families in need. This year, we want to reach more families than ever before to ensure that MSPCC families have what they need to celebrate together. Learn how you can help at mspcc.org/thanksgiving.


SUPPORT MSPCC!


By giving to MSPCC, you provide resources to teach young parents the skills they need to create safe, nurturing relationships with their babies, support high-quality services for children in foster care, counsel families in times of crisis, mobilize policymakers to protect children, and so much more. Visit mspcc.org/donate or scan the QR code below to make a difference for kids and families.




ARE YOU UP TO DATE ON THE STATE OF THE CHILD?

Sign up for MSPCC's e-newsletter to hear the latest news. Stay informed on advocacy efforts affecting children and ways you can help, learn how your support has changed the lives of our clients in various programs, and stay updated on what is happening with children in Massachusetts with news and coverage from MSPCC. Sign up at: mspcc.org/news

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