Mental illness has far-reaching consequences for youth, with over 17% of high school students having seriously considered attempting suicide.\textsuperscript{2} Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as exposure to trauma and violence, is one underlying reason for mental health problems, including depression and suicide.\textsuperscript{3} Prevention and treatment focused on building resilience and equipping youth with the skills and resources they need to thrive in the face of challenges can improve these outcomes and promote well-being.

At RTI International, we help clients promote resilience and reduce the risk for mental health problems by identifying and implementing evidence-based interventions for youth and their communities. By partnering with RTI, you’ll identify and improve strategies to help schools, communities, and families develop healthy habits to promote positive outcomes. Partner with us to identify your research needs, receive answers through innovative research and evaluation techniques, and measure the impacts of your programs. Our research and evaluation projects deliver actionable results, allowing you to create measurable, positive change in your community.

As many as 1 in 6 young children in the United States are affected by mental health problems such as depression and behavioral disorders.\textsuperscript{1}

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\textsuperscript{1} Cree RA, Bitsko RH, Robinson LR, Holbrook JR, Danielson ML, Smith DS, Kaminski JW, Kenney MK, Peacock G. Health care, family, and community factors associated with mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders and poverty among children aged 2–8 years — United States, 2016. MMWR, 2018;67(5):1377-1383


Project Highlights

School-Based Mental Health Program in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (National Institute of Justice (NIJ), 2016–2019). Funded by NIJ’s 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, we partnered with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina) to test the implementation, cost, and outcomes of three types of school-based mental health services. Enhanced school-based mental health services include training in evidence-based treatments, dialectical behavior therapy, and trauma-informed Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) groups.

A Randomized Evaluation of a Comprehensive, Whole-School Intervention for Discipline Disparities (NIJ, 2018–2021). In partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina), RTI is evaluating their three-pronged approach to improving self-efficacy and reducing disparities in suspensions and expulsions among African American males in high school. The approach uses Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, restorative practices, and culturally responsive practices to engage youth and staff members in reducing bias and improving school safety behaviors.

Evaluation of Men of Strength (MOST) Club (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017–2020). Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, that works to promote resilience and reduce men’s violence against women by challenging traditional norms about masculinity. RTI is working with MCSR to evaluate their MOST Club in high schools. The evaluation will collect web-based survey data from school staff members, MOST Club facilitators, and student participants to assess MOST Club implementation and outcomes. A social network analysis will also examine how program messages are disseminated from MOST Club members to their peers.

Evaluability Assessment and Evaluation of El Futuro (various funders, 2017–2019). El Futuro, a strategic partner of RTI’s, is a behavioral health organization serving Latino immigrant adults and youth in Durham, North Carolina. RTI has identified El Futuro’s data and evaluation needs and is developing and executing an evaluation of their mental health programs. We are working to disseminate findings of the evaluation, including adaptation of evidence-based mental health treatments, while also providing ongoing training and technical assistance in identified areas of need.

Formative Evaluation of Telemental Health Treatment of Latinx Victims of Crime (NIJ, 2019–2020). In partnership with El Futuro, RTI is exploring the feasibility and underlying barriers and supports to delivering mental health treatment via remote video and audio technology. The target population is Latinx victims of crime who may have obstacles to access in-person treatment.

Forward Promise National Evaluation Grant (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017–present). RTI is developing a comprehensive evaluation design report for the Foundation’s Forward Promise National Program Office. Forward Promise was designed to address trauma and healing among boys and young men of color. RTI’s evaluation planning process uses the “Evaluation Planning in Context” model, which incorporates a developmental evaluation approach using grounded theory.

Peer Health Exchange (PHE) Evaluation (Peer Health Exchange, 2019–2022). The PHE program trains college students to teach a 16-session, skills-based health curriculum in under-resourced high schools across the country. RTI’s evaluation uses survey and archival data to compare students in PHE schools with those in propensity-score matched schools. We are examining outcomes including mental and physical health, substance use, sexual behavior, social emotional learning, academic achievement, and accessing of related resources.

Evaluation of the Resilient Youth Initiative (North Central Health Services, 2019–2022). RTI conducted a process and outcome evaluation of substance use prevention, social and emotional learning, and mental health promotion programs implemented in approximately 80 primary and secondary schools in 8 counties in Indiana. The evaluation includes collection and analysis of data from surveys with students and program implementers, program observations, and student-level administrative data.