

December 2021 Youth Services Survey

Caregiver Supplemental Questions

Continued Impact of COVID-19 on Youth and Caregivers

County of San Diego Children, Youth and Families Behavioral Health Services

BACKGROUND

In December 2021, clients ages 13 and older and caregivers of all child and youth clients receiving outpatient mental health services from the County of San Diego Children, Youth & Families Behavioral Health Services (CYFBHS) system were asked to complete the Youth Services Survey (YSS). A supplementary survey was added to the YSS to gather information about clients' experiences attending school during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the switches from remote to in-person schooling. Additionally, the supplemental survey contained questions about bullying and youth and caregiver stress. This information will help County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services understand the continued impact of COVID-19 on youth and caregiver mental health.

SAMPLE AND METHODS

In December 2021, the survey was administered online, and 798 caregiver surveys were returned with a response to at least one supplemental question. Of these, 775 had usable data. Findings from the caregiver responses to the supplemental questions only are highlighted in this report. Not every caregiver responded to every question.

I. COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SCHOOL SCHEDULES, AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH




CURRENT SCHOOL SCHEDULE VS. SCHEDULE DURING SPRING OF 2021

Table 1: How often does your child attend school in person?	December 2021 (N=722)		June 2021 (N=773)	
	n	%	n	%
Never (my child had/has class online)	30	4%	213	28%
Sometimes (1-4 days a week or alternate days)	87	12%	191	25%
Always (5 days a week)	605	84%	278	36%

*An additional 12% of respondents reported that their child was not enrolled in school in June 2021.





In December 2021, most caregivers (94%) reported that their child was currently enrolled in school, and of these caregivers, 84% reported that their child was attending school in person five days a week (Table 1). A minority of caregivers (12%) reported that their child attended in person 1-4 days a week (hybrid in-person/remote learning), and just 4% reported that their child had school online. In contrast, caregivers stated that in the spring of 2021 following spring break, 28% attended in-person five days a week, 25% attended in-person 1-4 days a week, and 36% attended remotely only.

SCHOOL RETURN AND MENTAL HEALTH






Table 2: Did your child’s return to school this fall have an impact on his or her mental health?	December 2021 (N=670)	
	n	%
Yes - Positive Impact	354	 53%
Yes - Negative Impact	159	 24%
No - No Impact	157	 23%

Among the caregivers who reported that their child was currently enrolled in school and had attended school (either in-person or online) in the spring, slightly more than half (53%) felt that the return to school in the fall of 2021 had a positive impact on their child’s mental health. However, 24% felt that returning to school negatively impacted their child’s psychological health.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Table 3: Is the COVID-19 crisis currently causing your child to feel stressed?	December 2021 (N=772)	
	n	%
Not at all	198	 26%
A little bit	301	 39%
Somewhat	189	 24%
A lot	84	 11%





Most caregivers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic was causing their child to feel at least a little bit stressed (74%). This result is not surprising as COVID-19 rates were starting to surge in San Diego during the survey period.

Table 4: How is your child’s mental health currently?	December 2021 (N=773)	
	n	%
Very good	77	 10%
Good	269	 35%
Fair	288	 37%
Poor	115	 15%
Very poor	24	 3%






When asked about their child’s current mental health, 45% of caregivers reported that it was “good” or “very good,” 37% reported “fair,” and 18% reported “poor” or “very poor.”

II. COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CAREGIVER STRESS

COVID-19 STRESS AND PARENTING

Table 5: Is the COVID-19 crisis currently causing you to feel stressed?	n	December 2021 (N=768)	
		%	
Not at all	160		21%
A little bit	320		41%
Somewhat	188		24%
A lot	100		13%

Only 21% of caregivers reported that they were “not at all” stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 38% reported that the pandemic was causing them to feel “somewhat” or “a lot” stressed. However, most caregivers did not seem to feel that this stress was interfering with their parenting.

Table 6: In the past three months, how well do you feel you are coping with the day-to-day demands of raising your children?	n	December 2021 (N=768)	
		%	
Very well	172		22%
Somewhat well	462		60%
Not very well	91		12%
Not well at all	27		4%
I don’t know	16		2%

On the supplemental survey caregivers were asked, “In the past three months, how well do you think you are coping with the day-to-day demands of raising your children?” The majority of caregivers (83%) responded “very well” or “somewhat well.”

DECEMBER 2021 YSS COMMENTS

“What kind of support would help you cope with the COVID-19 crisis?”

“Respite, or camps, or activities for special needs kids with therapeutic help to give parents a break while kids are in a space place.”

“Activity and care for my children when they have to stay home from school while I’m at work.”

“An outlet for a break. Before covid I could let my kids go-to friends or family’s houses and have time for self care. Now I am the only one dealing with the kids and I need a break.”

“Better access to mental health services for adults.”

“Extension of child tax credit; continuation of mental health services for kids.”

“Financial support, mental health support for my children and myself.”

“Financial support so I don’t have to worry about missing work to feed my family, mental support to be able to cope with all the uncertainty. Community support. School support.”

“I’m not sure. I feel there are so much different information I don’t know who to trust.”

“Not feeling like we are outcasts due to non-vax”

“Everybody being vaxxed so we can move on with our lives.”

“Keeps schools open. Offer valid data on mask demands. Evaluate data in outdoor participation in sports in masks.”

“Everyone to get vaccinated and wear masks.”

“Lack of access to play opportunities for our child. She is suffering a lot from the lack of social interaction, and I would love an opportunity to let her play with other kids in a controlled and safe environment.”

“I am stressed about affording/purchasing food for my daughter. I do go to food pantries but they rarely give fresh fruits & vegetables.”

“Support with finding resources that could help me and a teenager would be great; most help is for young children.”

“Finding resources for any type of help is very hard and exhausting. Easier and more knowledge of how to get help would be great.”

III. BULLYING

The December 2021 Supplemental Survey also contained two questions about bullying. Nearly a third of caregivers (32%), reported that their child had been bullied in person in the past year. Additionally, 11% reported that their child had been bullied electronically, including through texting and social media. A minority of caregivers were unaware if their child had been bullied in person (18%) or electronically (20%).

Table 7: During the past 12 months, has your child ever been bullied by someone in person?	In-Person Bullying (N=770)		Electronic Bullying (N=768)	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	246	32%	82	11%
No	388	50%	533	70%
I don't know	136	18%	153	20%

IV: KEY FINDINGS

- By December 2021 the majority of CYF clients (84%), had returned to full-time, in-person school.
- Most caregivers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic was causing them (79%) or their child (74%) to feel some stress, but the proportion that stated it was causing them “a lot” of stress (13%) or their child “a lot” of stress (11%) was small.
- A minority of caregivers (15%) reported that in the past three months they were having trouble coping with the day-to-day demands of raising their children.
- CYF clients are more likely to be the victims of in-person bullying (32%) than cyber-bullying (11%). However, a fifth of caregivers (20%) were not sure if their child had been electronically bullied in the past year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Although fewer families are struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, service providers should continue to assess for pandemic-related stress.
- Service providers should identify clients who are being bullied (in-person and electronic) and provide psychoeducation to caregivers about bullying. These actions will help caregivers determine if bullying is a problem for their child and take steps to address this issue.