



Children's  
Wisconsin

SHINE  
THROUGH

Creating Solutions for Mental & Behavioral Health

December 2023

## Donor Report

**There simply is no health without mental health. Because of you, Children's Wisconsin is well on its way to leading the nation with a groundbreaking mental and behavioral health care model for kids and teens in Wisconsin and beyond. Thank you for your generosity!**

### **Prioritizing mental and behavioral health in our new Emergency Department and Trauma Center**



In early October, the new Skywalk Building opened at the Children's Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospital, featuring a new Emergency Department and Trauma Center (EDTC), along with the pediatric and neonatal transport team and the Skywalk retail pharmacy.

According to the Children's Hospital Association's Pediatric Health Information System, suicide attempts, ideation and self-injury have become the most common mental health conditions seen in pediatric hospitals' emergency departments nationwide. The stats are staggering: approximately two million adolescents attempt suicide each year.

As you know, Children's treats kids with urgent mental health needs at the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic. At the same time, we're working to prevent issues from becoming a crisis. All eligible kids and teens entering the EDTC, no matter the reason, are screened for suicidal thoughts and ideation. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, Children's screened 10,279 kids in the EDTC, of which 1,624 (17.2%) screened positive. Without vital screening, these concerns may have gone undetected and lives may have been lost.

Moreover, two rooms in the EDTC were specifically designed to be safer for kids with mental and behavioral health issues who may be at risk of harming themselves or others, including our clinicians. These secure rooms are located in a calmer area and equipment in the room can be locked for safety reasons.

We're excited for the continued integration of mental and behavioral health (MBH) services into the care we provide system-wide. As a supporter of our MBH initiatives, you are leading critical change for kids and families, here in Wisconsin and beyond. Thank you for all you do!

Thanks in part to generous funding by Ladish Co. Foundation and the Jendusa family, the new Skywalk building was designed to help families access the EDTC more quickly and easily in times of need. Funding also allowed for much-needed expansion of MBH services.

# Immediate traction through philanthropy: increased access



Since 2019, groundbreaking philanthropy has allowed Children's Wisconsin to redefine care for pediatric mental and behavioral health. Whether families access services through routine checkups or while in crisis, our **Integrated Mental and Behavioral Health (IMBH) program** is working to increase access and provide more immediate support.

**The stats below reflect how your ongoing support and generosity have helped increase access to care and profoundly impacted the lives of so many kids and families.**

## DURING ROUTINE CHECKUPS: Our Behavioral Health Consultants (BHCs) in action

Now staffed across all 21 of the Children's Wisconsin **primary care clinics**, our pediatricians and BHCs work side-by-side to ensure mental and behavioral health is a standard part of our care. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, our BHCs:

- Had **25,446** connections with kids and families
- Served **16,196** unique patients

We also currently screen for mental and behavioral health concerns in one of our **urgent care locations**, where roughly 9% of eligible kids screen positive. Of those, 3% are acutely positive and need immediate care. Plans for screening across our six urgent care locations are underway. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, our urgent care MBH consultants:

- Had **481** connections with kids and families
- Served **456** unique patients

## WHILE IN CRISIS: Adding new entry points and support for kids and families

Children's Wisconsin is transforming infrastructure and adding unique entry points to better serve kids experiencing a mental health crisis. The first of its kind in the region, **the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic** fills a critical gap in care. Whether a Children's Wisconsin patient or not, children and teens ages 5-18 accompanied by a guardian can receive immediate care, with no appointment or referral required. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, we served:

- **752** kids
- Families traveling as far as **300 miles** seeking our services

Additionally, as noted on the previous page, all eligible kids and teens entering the **EDTC**, no matter the reason, are screened for suicidal thoughts and ideation. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, Children's Wisconsin screened 10,279 kids in the EDTC, of which 1,624 (17.2%) screened positive.

# We can't manage what we don't measure

## An update on the Craig Yabuki Chair for Mental and Behavioral Health Research

"We can't manage what we don't measure." This simple premise is at the core of the not-so-simple work being done by Michael S. Gaffrey, PhD, as Director of Mental and Behavioral Health Research and the Craig Yabuki Chair for Mental and Behavioral Health Research at Children's Wisconsin. In May 2023, Children's Wisconsin announced the appointment of Dr. Gaffrey. Recently, the Foundation had the opportunity to talk to him about his first three months in the role.



### Tell us more about your role.

This is a new role focused on integrating mental and behavioral health (MBH) research into all spaces and systems that touch the lives of kids and families: our primary and specialty care clinics and out in the community, including schools. In many ways, my role is to build research infrastructure into the Children's system — a matrixed environment — so that we're all on the same page and able to write the story of our impact on children's mental and behavioral health together. My initial infrastructure-building efforts are focused on helping us better organize and measure more than just volumes of kids served — they will help us determine if we are helping as much as we think we are and whether there are new things we should be doing. Ultimately, these early efforts will allow us to learn from what we do in real-time, a critical step for continuing to ensure that kids who struggle with depression or developmental disorders receive the best possible treatment early in life and are able to live to their fullest potential.

### What are you most excited about as you look ahead?

Our kids and families are in crisis. I'm excited to blaze trails in what mental and behavioral health will look like over time and find synergies with the great work already happening here. Children's is the right place and it's the right time to be doing this work.

### Prior to working at Children's you studied preschoolers and mental health. Why is this research so important?

The science is clear that the earlier a child struggles with mental health challenges, the more likely they are to experience a lifelong path of substantial functional impairment and illness burden, including increased risk for suicide. As a result, it's critical for us to identify and treat mental health difficulties as early as possible and to better understand the factors that place children at lesser or greater risk in the first place, so we can act even earlier. Much of my research and that of others indicates that we can confidently identify many mental health concerns as early as the preschool years and risk factors even earlier. At Children's, I will continue to focus on these questions — especially as they relate to depression and suicide — and work with my colleagues to develop innovative strategies that integrate individual-child information with system-level data to better support our kids. This is the type of research that is only possible at a place like Children's.

### What would you say to donors interested in supporting your work?

There's no better time than now to maximize return on investment by changing the course of mental and behavioral health — not just for a single child but the entire community. At Children's, we are championing the transformational power of childhood research to raise everyone up and help us re-imagine mental and behavioral healthcare for children. Things have never been more actionable than they are now, and we need you — our philanthropic supporters — by our side. Thank you for what you've already accomplished!

# Meeting kids and families — where and when they need us most

## The healing power of our integrated care navigators

To help kids thrive, care navigators wrap around the family to meet their immediate health needs — and sometimes this means prioritizing the parents. Alexis\*, the mother of four kids with mental and behavioral health needs, came to Children's Wisconsin looking for help. Her case was referred to Rebecca Kazda, lead for mental and behavioral health care navigation, who soon learned that Alexis and her kids were experiencing domestic violence. Rebecca started by providing a safe space for Alexis to talk about her struggles.

Rebecca worked with Alexis for eight months. She helped her build the courage to remove herself and her kids from the abusive environment, and connected her with the Sojourner Family Peace Center, where she participated in weekly support groups. Rebecca also helped find a therapist that would help Alexis heal from trauma, and provided the family with community resources to ease the transition to their new home.

Step by step, Alexis became more independent and empowered to take better care of herself and her family. At the end of their time together, Alexis asked Rebecca to help her work with the school system to secure appropriate accommodations for one of her kids who was diagnosed with mental health issues and learning disabilities.

When Rebecca closed the case in May 2023, Alexis had grown in confidence and in her ability to fully advocate for her kids.

*\*We are using a different name to protect the family's privacy.*



## A long journey ahead — together

Thank you for joining our community of health care leaders, providers, philanthropists and advocates who are transforming the way we care for kids. We hope to inspire your sustained support as we move forward with this endeavor.

**Philanthropic Support:** Your ongoing support will continue to make a transformational difference. You can donate online or work directly with a member of our Foundation team.

**Advocacy:** Help us inspire others to join the movement.

Please contact Cassie Curry, Director of Development, Mental and Behavioral Health, at (414) 266-7551 or [CCurry@childrenswi.org](mailto:CCurry@childrenswi.org) to explore opportunities.



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