

## Center for Child Development re-imagining our model of care and increasing access

In a newly released report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that **1 in 36 children in the U.S. has autism spectrum disorder — a 317% increase in prevalence since just 2000.**

The reason behind this staggering increase is largely unknown. At the same time, the journey to diagnosis is a lengthy and challenging process given provider shortages and long wait lists — and diagnosis is only the first step for Wisconsin families. The traditional model of care is no longer enough.

Families with kids and teens who have autism spectrum disorder, developmental and cognitive delays, attention and behavioral disorders, and related conditions need more immediate access to specialized services. As advocates of mental and behavioral health at Children's Wisconsin, you already support establishing an integrated model of care that fills a much-needed void in the care continuum. Early intervention can make all the difference in the life of a child.

In 2022, the visits to Children's Wisconsin by families who have kids with autism spectrum disorder and related symptoms totaled 5,000. The demand for the services has only grown, and we exceeded our capacity with more than 1,800 kids and teens on our waitlist. To increase access, Children's Wisconsin opened a new Center for Child Development — a regional hub for coordinated services that provides autism support to primary care providers, patients and families, specialty care such as neurology, mental and behavioral health, and occupational therapy. Every aspect of the building was designed for this patient population, from the quiet and easily accessible entrance to outdoor calming spaces to varied sensory experiences throughout the clinic.



*Families visiting the new Center for Child Development will be welcomed with an intentionally designed lounge and waiting area.*

## Center for Child Development (continued)

Families can come to us at any point in their journey – from diagnoses through treatment – to access resources, seek advocacy support with schools and providers, and better understand how developmental and behavioral challenges, like ADD and ADHD, impact their child’s daily life. We also will educate those who directly care for kids, including primary care providers, daycare and school staff, teachers, emergency medical transport teams, law enforcement officers, and others, so they can meet kids and families where they are. It’s important to note that insurance does not cover this important work, which is why philanthropic support is critical. It’s also crucial that we conduct research to advance our care and understanding and then share it with our colleagues nationwide.

We won’t stop until we create a Wisconsin where all children receive the support they need, when they need it, so they can be healthy and thrive.



“We will not be done once the building doors open. Instead, the building will represent a newfound commitment to our kids and families, serving as a springboard to further grow and improve the lives of all kids with developmental and behavioral challenges and their families.”

*Daniel Schulteis, MD  
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrician  
Director, Autism Services*



## Immediate traction through philanthropy: increased access

Since 2019, your groundbreaking philanthropy has allowed us to embark on the creation of a gold standard for the delivery of mental and behavioral health care and build the infrastructure to ensure kids get the very best help – where and when they need it.

Below is a snapshot demonstrating what we have accomplished and what we will continue to accomplish with your ongoing support and generosity.

<b>529,918</b> total mental health encounters	<b>79,670</b> touch points by behavioral health consultants	<b>62,637</b> screenings performed
<b>472</b> patients screened positive for a high risk of suicide - approximately 1% of all attempted screens		<b>2,168</b> visits at our walk-in mental health clinics



## Screening practices spur \$100,000 grant to prevent suicide

While Children's Wisconsin regularly screens for suicidal ideation in primary care clinics and in the emergency department, we implemented suicide screening in nearly all of our regional and specialty clinics in July 2023.

Since then, we've screened almost 26,000 kids. **That's 26,000 kids who would have gone undetected for suicidal thoughts.** Of these, nearly 2,000 screened positive. Based in part on this work, Children's Wisconsin was awarded a \$100,000 competitive grant from the Preventing Youth Suicide National Collaborative to better identify and care for youth at risk for suicide. It's one more way we are committed to working toward zero suicide among kids in Wisconsin.



## Kenosha Mental Health Walk-In Clinic opens

**As part of a recent \$3 million gift from Kohl's, mental health walk-in care is now available at the Children's Wisconsin Kenosha Clinic.** The Kenosha location builds off the success of the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic, which opened in March of 2022 and is located on the Milwaukee campus. Both clinics are staffed by licensed therapists, social workers and clinic assistants. Any child or teen aged 5-18 can access care immediately, with no appointment or referral required.



## Shining a spotlight on mental and behavioral health

**The Sugar Plum Luncheon is Milwaukee's premier holiday-themed event with nearly 290 attendees.**

Focused on mental and behavioral health, last November's event raised a record \$232,000 and featured honorary chair and Children's Wisconsin Foundation Board Director Gail Yabuki, Amy Herbst, vice president of mental and behavioral health at Children's Wisconsin, and grateful patient Carson Molle.

# Zaylyn's story

In June 2022, 6-year-old Zaylyn started complaining of stomach aches. He described the feeling as though someone was punching him just above his stomach and below his chest. Zaylyn's mom, Dominique, knew that didn't sound like a typical stomach ache.

Combined with him seeming irritable — and also knowing some of the stresses going on at home — led her to think this was related to anxiety. Dominique shared, "It didn't feel like an emergency, but it was starting to feel unmanageable." That's when she looked up the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-In Clinic on the Children's Wisconsin Milwaukee campus. She took Zaylyn in on a Friday evening, and he immediately saw a therapist who created artwork with him and spent time with him one-on-one.

Zaylyn reflected on his experience, saying, "I talked about my feelings. They helped me put things into words." Not only did the clinic team help Zaylyn manage his emotions that day, but they also made him an appointment with a Children's Wisconsin behavioral health consultant the following Monday.

Dominique found the whole experience helpful and remembers feeling like a weight had been lifted off her and Zaylyn. Today, Zaylyn is 7 and is in a much better place with his mental health. He has learned how to use new coping skills like breathing, and he's gotten much better at putting his anxiety into words. He is seeing a long-term therapist and has a social-emotional group at school that provides support.



## 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.



Creating Solutions for Mental & Behavioral Health



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