



May 4, 2020

Melissa DeRosa
Secretary to New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Ms. DeRosa:

The Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids applauds Governor Cuomo for his recent announcement that insurance companies must waive copays and fees for mental health services and substance use disorder/addiction services for all essential health workers. This proposal rightfully recognizes the enormous emotional toll this pandemic is having on essential workers, who continue to put their lives at risk every day. **The Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids Campaign urges the Governor to extend this order to the children of essential workers.**

This pandemic is having a devastating impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children. Extensive research on adverse childhood experiences tells us that the kinds of trauma caused by COVID-19 – including economic and housing insecurity, heightened risk of child welfare involvement, disruptions in mental health care, and loss of loved ones – have long-lasting repercussions across the health and wellbeing of children as they become adults. A recent study on the impact of COVID-19 on children in China found that about one in five – or 20% – of children reported symptoms of depression and anxiety after their schools had been closed for a monthⁱ. These rates are much higher than those experienced before this pandemic.

Particularly for the children of essential workers, this pandemic is enacting a terrible toll on them as they grapple with the stress of family members facing a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19, and the profound impact of losing a family member to this virus. Recent data from the CDC found that at least 9,282 healthcare workers in the US have contracted the novel coronavirus, though this figure is likely an underestimate. More than 70% of these are women, many of whom are undoubtedly raising children with partners or alone.ⁱⁱ

The losses children experience will be on top of the serious feelings of fear, abandonment, and separation anxiety children of essential workers undergo. Providing children with behavioral health supports is the key for reducing long-term poor mental health, as well as reducing the risk of school failure and poor family and personal relationships in the future.

The Governor has recognized that what we do today directly impacts what happens tomorrow. We cannot afford to ignore the immediate needs facing the State's most vulnerable children or we will see the negative health and social outcomes multiplied in the coming months and years.

The Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids Campaign therefore strongly urges the Governor to extend the waiver of out-of-pocket costs for behavioral health services to the children of essential health

workers. We stand ready to support the Governor in strengthening supports for the most at-risk children and families in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Members of the Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids Leadership Council

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
The Coalition for Behavioral Health
The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
Families Together in New York State
Institute for Community Living, Inc.
JCCA New York
The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services
Legal Action Center
The New School Center for New York City Affairs
New York Foundling
New York Center for Child Development
NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health
NYS Council for Community Behavioral Health Care
Rising Ground
SCO Family of Services
Vibrant Emotional Health

ⁱ Xinyan Xie, BA et al. "Mental Health Status Among Children in Home Confinement During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak in Hubei Province, China." *JAMA Pediatrics*: April 24, 2020.
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2765196>

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Characteristics of Health Care Personnel with COVID-19 — United States, February 12–April 9, 2020." April 17, 2020.
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6915e6.htm?s_cid=mm6915e6_w