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Mental Illness in Children of New York State

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Mental Illness occurs in approximately 1 out of 5 children (<18 years old). Despite this frequency little is known about the best treatment methods for to children with mental illness. Even less is known about outcomes when children do receive treatment. In addition, many families are unable to obtain necessary treatment for their children secondary to cost or lack of access to appropriate professionals.

I collected, charted, and graphed much of currently available data about children with mental illness in NYS. The education department provides some of the most longitudinal, useful, accessible and consistent data. Yet their data does not include pre or post treatment measures. Most available data bases include only 2-4 years of longitudinal data, with minimal data about treatment or outcome measures. From available information one can state there is an association between having a childhood mental illness in NYS and experiencing a higher drop-out rate from school, increased incarceration rate, and increased use of the foster care. Recent research indicates that if mental illness is not treated in children, that in adulthood these people will present with worsening of symptoms and impairment.

We need better data before we can state with certainty what preventative measures or treatment should be provided to children with mental illness. This data needs to include specific positive outcome measures in children with mental illness as well as specific treatments and interventions associated with these outcomes.