

COVID19 Projections and Effects on Mental Health and Addiction in Oklahoma

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

A report published by Healthy Minds Policy Initiative projects mental health and addiction needs that will arise from COVID19 pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn include increased suicide and addiction deaths, childhood trauma, and a growing need for mental health treatment capacity amid increasing anxiety and loneliness.

The analysis was conducted based on historical natural disaster evidence and well-documented mental health effects of economic downturns.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Suicide ideation and attempts will increase substantially.** An estimated 92,000 more Oklahomans may experience suicidal thoughts and 18,400 may attempt suicide within the next 12 months.
- **Childhood mental health needs will increase substantially.** For example, as many as 30% of children involved in quarantines may experience post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Unemployment and financial stress will increase drug addiction.** For example, more than 13,000 additional Oklahomans may develop substance use disorders (SUD).
- **Hundreds of Oklahomans may die from mental health issues.** We estimate 374 additional deaths from opioid overdoses and suicides alone due to economic hardship in the next year.
- **Increased adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).** Economic hardship is the most commonly reported ACE. A child who has experienced ACEs is more likely to experience learning or behavioral issues and to develop a wide range of health problems including obesity, alcoholism, and drug use.

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

These projections show that as the virus and economic downturn unfold in Oklahoma, it is increasingly important to focus resources, funding and policies on mental health treatment.