



## Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Services for Children and Families

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in six\* U.S. youth experience a mental health disorder each year. Yet with a shortage of child psychiatrists nationally, access to behavioral health treatment is a significant problem. As a result, many youth do not receive the specialty treatment they need.

Children and youth are more likely to see trusted pediatricians/primary care physicians (PCPs) than behavioral health specialists. At Carelon Behavioral Health, we support a peer learning approach to care delivery and work collaboratively with PCPs to increase their ability to manage behavioral health, particularly for children. This model has improved early intervention, increased access, and reduced stigma for families navigating specialty behavioral health services.

### ACCESS Mental Health for Youth\*\*

Established in 2014, Connecticut's ACCESS Mental Health for Youth program is a state- and federally-funded initiative that enables all youth under 22 years of age, regardless of insurance coverage, to gain access to psychiatric and behavioral health services through contact with their PCPs. Through telephonic consultation, psychiatrists, care coordinators, and family peer specialists answer questions and provide valuable information and referral resources to primary care physicians seeking assistance in treating youth with behavioral health concerns.

This program is offered via three ACCESS hubs spread out across the state. Each hub is supported by a key local behavioral health organization: Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital, Wheeler Clinic, and Yale Child Study Center.

In September 2021, the program expanded services to support PCPs treating young adults 19 through 21 years of age through an award funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

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## Average Yearly Utilization\*\*\*

7,437

Phone consults

1,613

Youth Served

4.9 out of 5

Provider Satisfaction  
Rate

47%

of Enrolled Practices  
Used at Least Once

Family Peer Specialists play a unique but important role in ACCESS Mental Health CT, offering the family support in navigating the mental health system, connecting families to behavioral health treatment, and informing them of community-based resources.

*“Thank you for all your help. You are the reason we were able to find somewhere to get him an appointment.” –Parent, Wheeler Clinic Hub Team*

## Here’s What Participating Providers Are Saying About ACCESS Mental Health CT

*“ACCESS-MH is the most effective state run program I have seen in my 40 years of pediatric practice.”*

*“Access Mental Health (AMH) CT has truly transformed the way I practice Pediatric medicine.”*

*“My patients have benefited greatly from my liaison with Access Mental Health, and I have become a better provider of care as a result of my ability to work with Access Mental Health.”*

*This program is the best thing that has happened to Connecticut”*

*“Had it not been for the support and training I received from the child psychiatrists at AMH, many of my patients would not be receiving the care that they desperately need. I am a far better pediatrician because of ACCESS Mental Health.”*

*“As a primary care physician in today’s current environment, I could not take care of my patients’ psychiatric needs without having ACCESS Mental Health on call. They have been invaluable in connecting patients to care in addition to answering my medication questions. Their expertise and accessibility are truly invaluable to my practice.”*

## ACCESS Mental Health for Moms

In 2022, ACCESS Mental Health CT was expanded to support providers treating pregnant and postpartum patients up to one-year post delivery presenting with mental health and/or substance use concerns, regardless of insurance. Now front-line obstetric and primary care providers have real-time access to telephonic psychiatric consultation and resource and referral support through Yale by calling one statewide toll-free number (1-833-978-MOMS (6667)).



For more information about ACCESS Mental Health CT, visit [accessmhct.com](https://accessmhct.com).

\*<https://nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Kids>

\*\*Funded by the Department of Children and Families

\*\*\*Fiscal Year 2019-21 Data

\*\*\*\*Funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services