

# **The Norwalk Partnership**

PREVENTING SUBSTANCE MISUSE  
AMONG YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

## **What We Know About Youth Mental Health Before & During COVID**

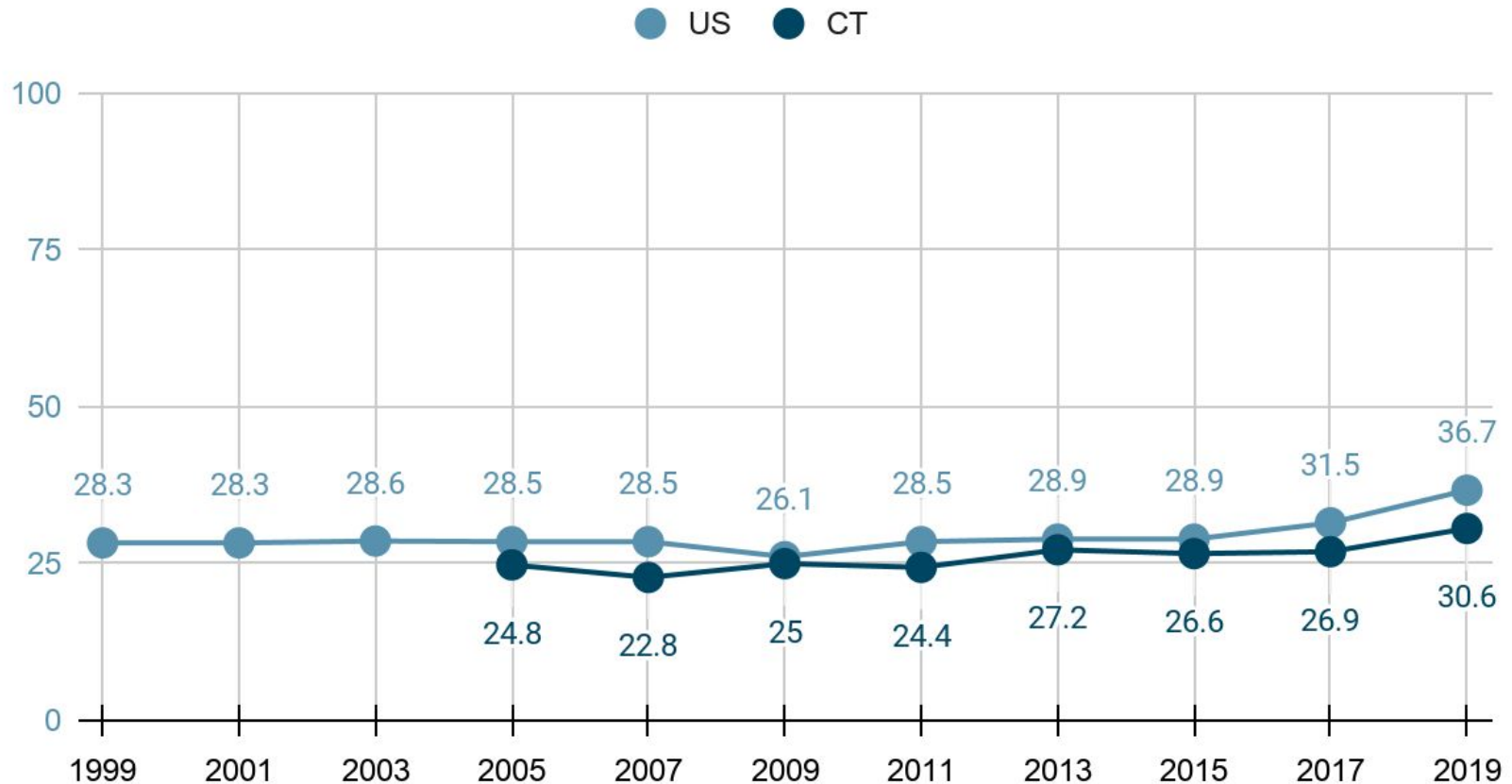


# Before COVID



# Teen depression was increasing prior to COVID in the US and in CT

% HS Students Feeling Sad or Hopeless, 1999-2019, US & CT



Based on YRBS (national & state): Youth reporting feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2+ weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities, ever during the 12 months before the survey

# Teen anxiety was also increasing

National Institutes of Health data show:

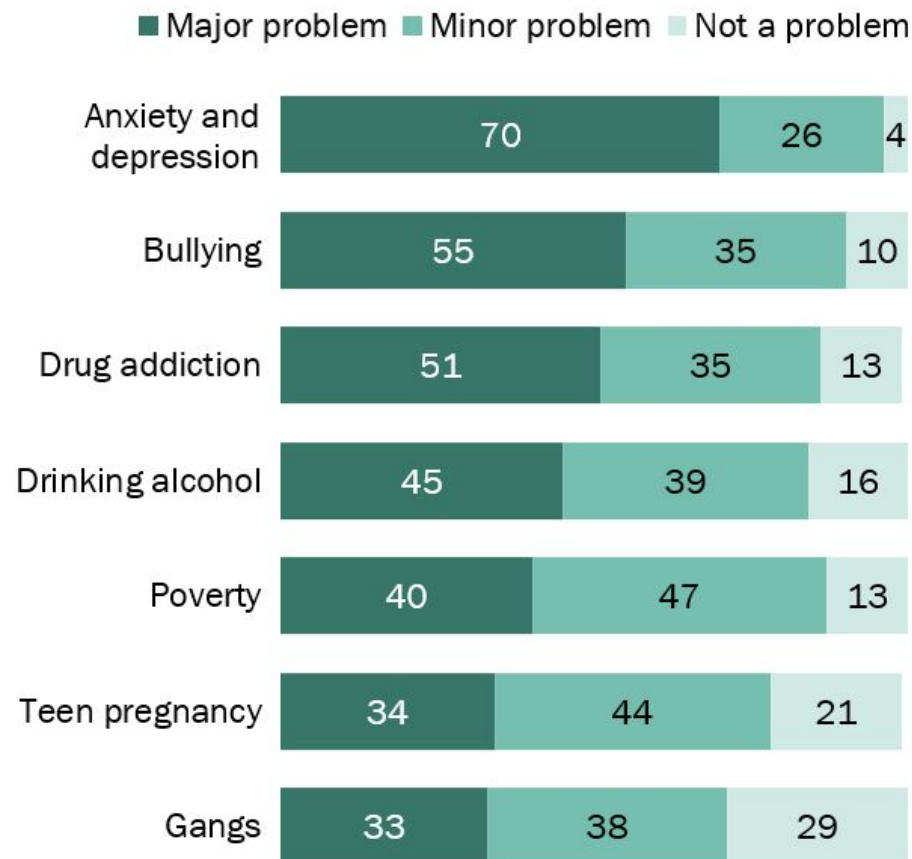
- Nearly **1 in 3** adolescents ages 13 to 18 experience an anxiety disorder
- Anxiety disorders in children and teens increased **20%** between 2007 and 2012

-American Academy of Pediatrics © Nov. 2019



## Anxiety and depression top list of problems teens see among their peers

*% of teens saying each of the following is a \_\_\_\_ among people their age in the community where they live*



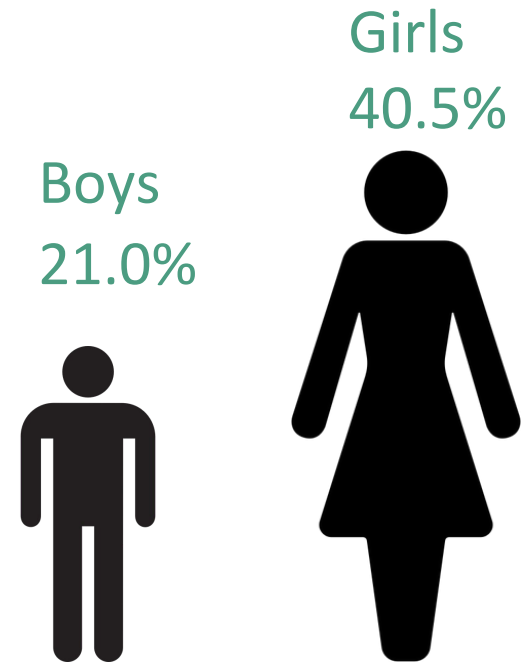
Pew Research Youth Survey, Sept-Nov 2018

# In CT, girls, Latinx, multiracial, and LGB students were at higher risk of depression

Sad/hopeless = 30.6% all teens

- Boys: 21.0%, **Girls: 40.5%**
- White: 28.2%, Black: 30.3%,  
**Latinx: 36.8%, Multiracial:**  
**34.7%**
- Straight: 25.0%, **LGB: 64.3%**

**More than 2x  
the overall  
teen rate!**



CT School Health Survey 2019

## ... and of suicidal ideation



Seriously considered suicide in past year= 12.7% all teens

- Boys: 9.3%, **Girls: 15.9%**
- White: 12.5%, Black: 11.0%, **Latinx: 13.9%**, **Multiracial: 18.6%**
- Straight: 8.2%, **LGB: 36.7%**

**3x the overall teen rate.**  
**~4.5x the rate among straight teens**

CT School Health Survey 2019

## ... and of suicide attempt



Attempted suicide 1+ times in past year= 6.7% all teens

- Boys: 5.2%, **Girls: 8.3%**
- White: 5.7%, Black: 5.8%, **Latinx: 10.1%, Multiracial: 10.3%**
- Straight: 4.1%, **LGB: 19.5%**

**1 in 14 teens attempted suicide  
overall...  
among LGB students, 1 in 5**

CT School Health Survey 2019



# In Norwalk, suicide was a concern in 2018 youth survey

- 20% of students surveyed (7th, 9th, 11th) reported feeling sad or depressed most or all of the time in the past month\* *\*not same as state measure*
  - **27% of girls, 13% of boys**



- 14% of students reported having attempted suicide 1+ times
  - **16% of 7th graders**

**Norwalk teen suicide  
attempt rate was 2x  
the state average**

# Since COVID



# The Good News

Teens surveyed between May and July 2020 reported:

- Lower rates of depression & loneliness compared to 2018
- Only slightly higher rates of unhappiness & life dissatisfaction compared to 2018
- **53%** felt stronger & more resilient

-2020 Institute of Family Studies & Wheatley Institute



# Why?

More  
Sleep



More & better  
family time



# Teens who are struggling are more likely to be dealing with economic issues at home

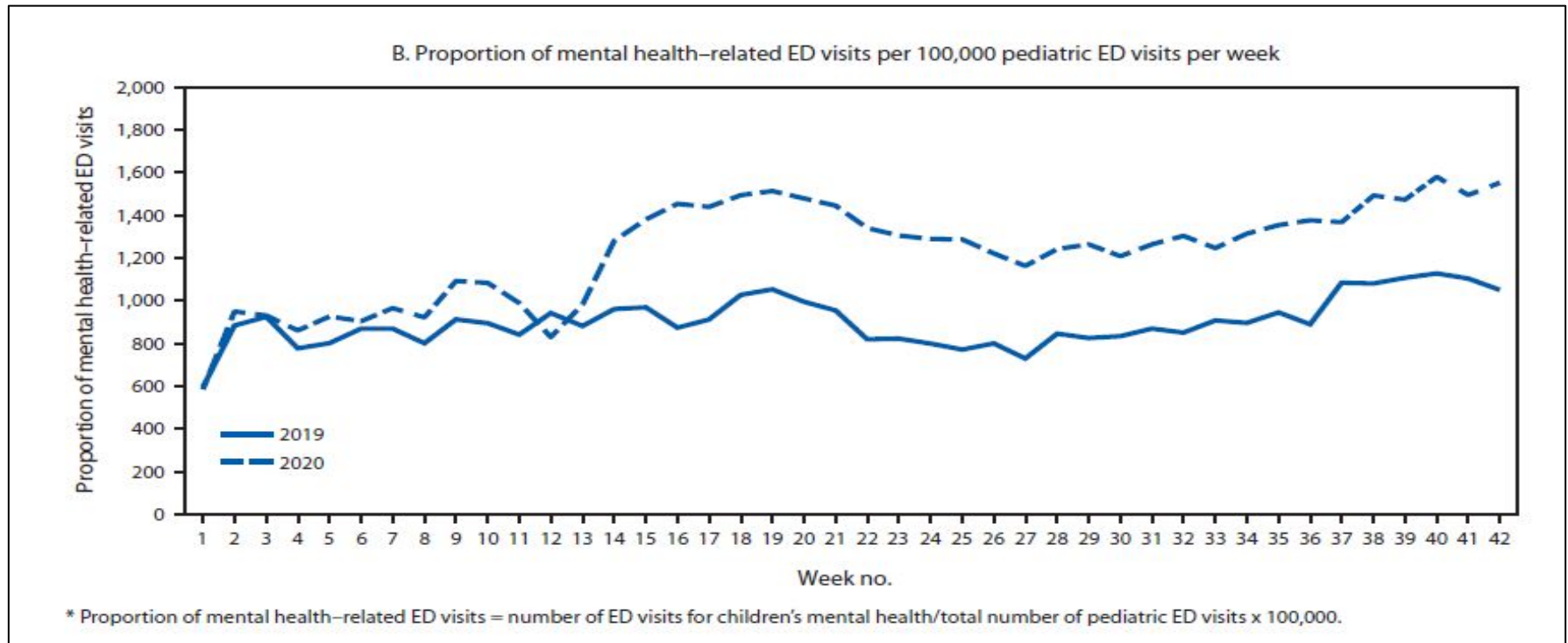
**Food insecurity & having a parent lose a job during the pandemic were associated with significant increase in depression**



# The Bad News

## Children are having more Emergency Room mental health visits

Mental Health-Related Emergency Department Visits Among US Children Aged <18 Years, January 1–October 17, 2020



Source: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report



# CT Youth Suicides Are Increasing



## CT PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT: YOUTH SUICIDE A CALL TO ACTION

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE PAST FOUR WEEKS

Tragically, in the past four weeks Connecticut has lost four young teens to suicide. We share this alert so that during these uncertain times youth collectively receive increased support, and so adults understand that right now youth are:

- 1) Struggling with feelings of uncertainty
- 2) Feeling isolated and lonely
- 3) Experiencing losses and grief
- 4) Needing increased mental health support
- 5) Impacted by world events

The COVID pandemic and civil unrest in our country has increased uncertainty for all us, including our youth, and we cannot underestimate the impact. Physical and social distancing, increased isolation as cold weather approaches, school concerns, changes in relationships, and worries for family and friend's health and the future of our country all contribute toward increased anxiety and despair. We must work to mitigate this to prevent further tragedy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT YOUTH

It is paramount that we specifically consider and address feelings of grief, loss and disruption for youth. While the COVID pandemic disruption may be at the forefront of concern, other events and violence in our country due to racism and the tumultuous election have added to despair and anxiety.

Adults at school and home need to encourage and model open communication and create opportunities for youth to discuss their sense of loss. Work collectively with youth, parents, educators, other trusted adults, and organizations in the community to nurture a compassionate community that provides a sense of safety and belonging for all.

### EVERYTHING IS

### DIFFERENT FOR YOUTH

- Nothing is the same as it used to be. COVID has changed and disrupted the lives of youth.
- They feel the weight and impact of the pandemic in ways we may not fully understand.
- They may not always be able to articulate what they are feeling or why they are feeling a certain way.
- The brain of a youth is still developing up throughout their twenties. Thus, their coping skills and impulsivity are often challenged and limited.
- Their support system has greatly diminished and they are feeling disconnected. Friends may be in school on a different day, some friends may be fully remote learning, and others may have changed schools or towns due to a move.
- They may be grappling with the loss of missed experiences taken for granted in the past such as going to the movies, dating, club/group activities, sports, concerts, attending dances and school events, or simply gathering with friends. It seems hopeless, as there is no real end in sight.
- They may need more intensive intervention to help them process their emotions. It is well documented that grief may show up differently in youth than it does in adults (Pearlman et. al, 2014). It's not uncommon for some youth to express grief as anxiety, anger, frustration, or inability to focus.

As of 10/30/20,  
CT had lost 7  
youth to suicide  
in 2020, with 4  
deaths in  
October alone.

*There was another  
teen death last week.*

# What's happening in Norwalk now?





# Police are receiving fewer MH calls, overall & for youth

All MH calls, all ages, Jan. 1 - Oct. 31, past 3 years:

- 2018: 492
- 2019: 546
- 2020: 484



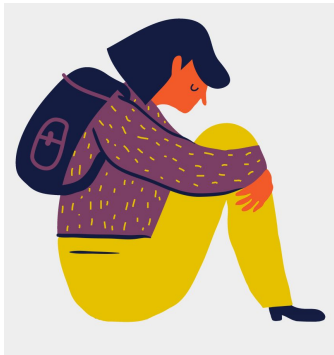
MH calls from the high schools, 2019 and 2020:

- 2019: 15 (9 at NHS, 6 at BMHS)
- 2020: 2 (1 at NHS, 1 at BMHS)

**Fewer people have eyes on kids... are they struggling alone at home?!**

# Teen Talk counselors are seeing an increase in MH/depression

- 53.8% HS students are presenting with a Mental Health issue, compared to 46.7% last year.
- >1 in 4 HS students is presenting with depression this year.



Many remote students are disengaged and unmotivated



Rise in depression at both Norwalk high schools

Source: Kids in Crisis communication 11/20

# ES teachers' primary concerns are about mental health

**#1:** Students social-emotional health and wellbeing



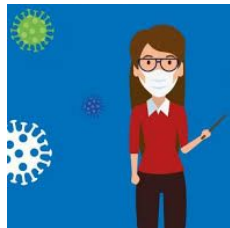
**#2:** Trauma experiences related to COVID



**#3:** How to support students & how to support caregivers in supporting their children



**#4:** Teachers social-emotional health and wellbeing, and



**#5:** Community supports and referral process



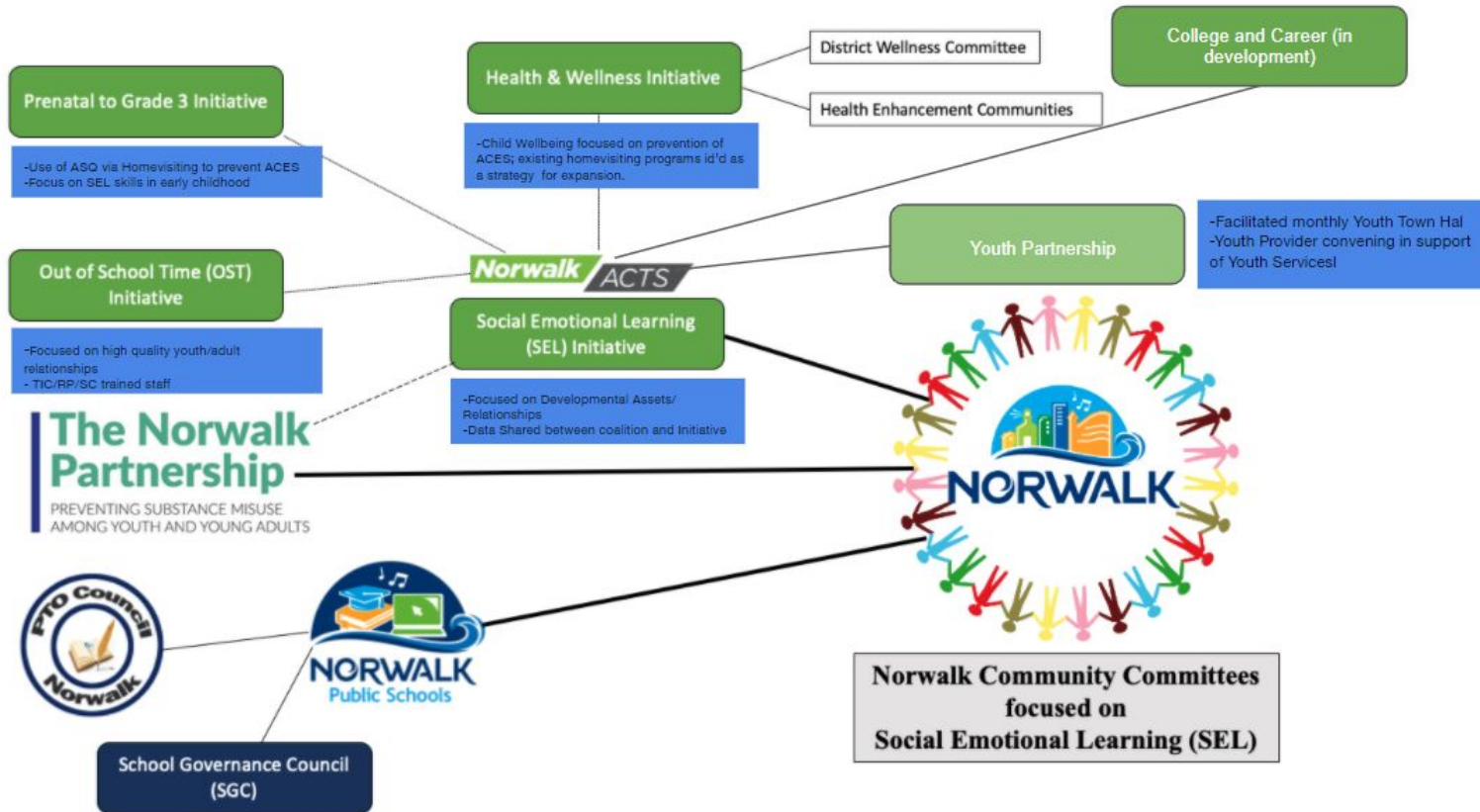
What are you seeing?

# Community Partners

## Addressing these Needs



# How Collective Impact Supports Norwalk Youth



# **Free Resources Our Kids (& Parents) Should Know:**

## **Crisis:**

- Crisis Text Line: 741741
- Mobile Crisis: Dial 2-1-1, select option 1
- Kids in Crisis hotline: 203-661-1911

## **Referrals & Support at School:**

- Teen Talk Counselors
- School-Based Health Centers
- School Resource Officers

## **Peer Support options:**

- Norwalk SMART Recovery Teen Group
- YSB Peer Connections Group
- Alateen at Norwalk Hospital
- CT's Young Adult Warmline: 855-6-HOPENOW (12-9pm daily)

# **Trainings You May Want to Host at Your Agency/for Your Community:**

- 4 What's Next - coping skills curriculum
- Mental Health First Aid (teen, youth, adult)
- Question-Persuade-Refer suicide prevention skills training
- Talk Saves Lives suicide awareness training
- Opioid awareness & Narcan administration
- Hidden in Plain Sight