

## CFCR's Mission Moments Newsletter



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Mental health can be a difficult thing to talk about, especially regarding our children. **October is World Mental Health Month, and it is important to recognize the tens of thousands of children in our community that struggle with mental health and behavioral disorders.** According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ([HHS](#)), **1 in 5 U.S. children ages 3-17 has a mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorder.** In the last year alone, our Mental Health Team served 1101 children in 1871 cases—that's 51% of all cases that Council worked on last year.

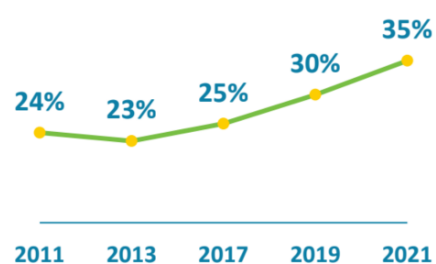
Last October, our [newsletter](#) detailed the findings from the 2019 Mecklenburg County Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Since then, the results from the 2021 survey for both [Mecklenburg](#) and wider North Carolina ([Middle School](#), [High School](#)) have been released, and these issues are not improving.

#### **Almost half of all teens in NC report feeling sad or hopeless:**

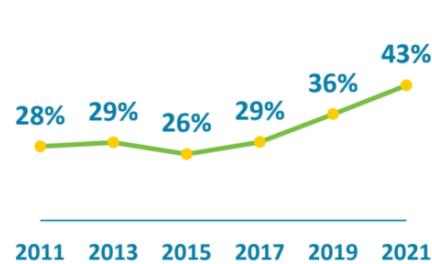
Too many of our teens in [Mecklenburg County](#) are struggling with hopelessness and depression. 43% of teens reported that they stopped doing some regular activities because they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row— that is almost half of all teens surveyed! This is an increase from 37% in 2019 and a staggering increase from 28% in 2011. A third of Mecklenburg teens reported their mental health was “not good” most or all of the time.

#### **Students across North Carolina are increasingly feeling sad or hopeless:**

**Percentage of NC Middle School Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless, 2011-2021**

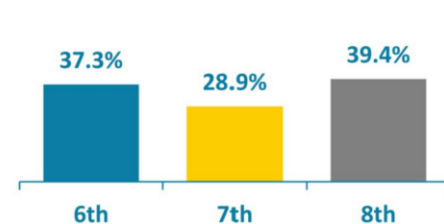


**Percentage of NC High School Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless, 2011-2021**

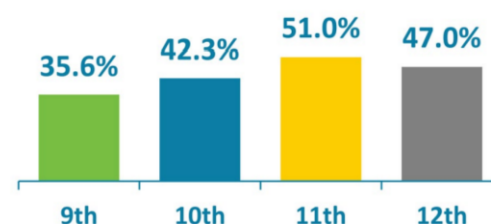


**This trend seem to generally increase by grade level, with a few outliers:**

**Percentage of NC Middle School Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless, by Grade Level, 2021**



**Percentage of NC High School Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless, by Grade Level, 2021**



One small improvement is that the percentage of students reporting attempting suicide in Mecklenburg County went down from 12% in 2019 to 9% in 2021— but that is still 9% too many. Students are also considering suicide less than in 2019, but still more than they did ten years ago. Safe and healthy mental health treatment is critical to keeping our teens alive and thriving.

### What We Can Do

As a wider community, the resources to help children not only thrive, but survive, are just not there. There are not enough specialized service providers, not enough placements available for children in treatment facilities, and little to no long-term planning for children after they are released from treatment. When children do receive the life-saving treatment they need, they often aren't getting an education at these centers, putting them even further behind their peers.

When children are in crisis, they need someone who understands the system and can advocate for their best interests. Parents and families need someone who can help guide them and their child through the complicated and emotionally difficult process of not only getting mental health treatment, but also reintegrating into the community afterwards. **Our Mental Health Team protects the legal rights of all children confined to a hospital inpatient psychiatric unit or residential treatment facility to ensure a safe and healthy reintegration back to their family, school, and greater community.**

Ensuring our children have access to safe and appropriate mental health care— and a long-term plan to thrive after that care— is essential to improving outcomes for children throughout their lifetime, including improved interpersonal relationship, career achievement, and financial security. You can help provide a lifeline for these children and their families by getting involved and supporting Council.

## Donate Today

Please contact our Advancement Director Amy Vavra at [amyv@cfcrights.org](mailto:amyv@cfcrights.org) for more information on ways to donate and to get involved.

### Data & Resources:

[How to Talk to Your Child About Their Mental Health](#) from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[2021 North Carolina Middle School Data Briefs](#)

[2021 North Carolina High School Data Briefs](#)

[2021 Mecklenburg County Youth Risk Behavior Survey for High School Students](#)

## Council Changemakers

This month we'd like to highlight our Associate Director of Institutional Relations Alaina Smith!

ALaina  
SMITH

Associate Director of  
Institutional Relations



**What led you to Council and how long have you been here?**

After serving many years as an Educator, I sought out work with a Nonprofit organization that would make a tangible difference on the lives of the children I interacted with every day. The Council presented the perfect opportunity to work with and for our community's youth.

**Tell us about your role here**

The Council relies on the generous support of individual and institutional donors every year to sustain critical services for youth and families. I currently lead efforts towards securing institutional grant funds through written proposals, in-person meetings, and ongoing stewardship.

**How do you find inspiration to tell Council's story through grant-writing?**

Telling our story through grant-writing is an honor and a privilege, as our youth are so often unrepresented in every-day life. I draw on real-life experiences as my time as an educator as well as the passionate work of my colleagues to inspire my writing. Further, the state of our community can often have a significant impact on proposals.

**What inspires you about Council?**

My colleagues at CFCR inspire me every day. I love hearing outbursts of joy and frustration in the office equally because both usually indicate the ongoing fight for a child's rights. Just as every student weighs on my heart, I know every case weighs on the hearts of my colleagues.

**What do you wish people knew about Council?**

The Council has long-term impacts on youth that may go unnoticed by the community as they are not immediately apparent in every case. The navigation work of our attorneys and social workers ensures youth have appropriate support far beyond when the Council first intervenes, ensuring youth have real pathways to success in the future.

**What are some good books for podcasts you'd recommend to a friend?**

Currently Reading: All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr  
Favorite Read: Under the Whispering Door, by T. J. Klune

**Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?**

If I'm not at work, you can find me teaching or playing music in my free time as I remain an active teacher and musician in the greater Charlotte area. Otherwise, you might find me spending time with a good book and my cats.

## Celebrate with Council

Council is making it easy to celebrate this holiday season. **We're asking you to join us in creating a new tradition of making change in the lives of the children we serve by planning for the holidays early!** Below are four stress-free, impactful ways to plan for the upcoming holiday season— [email us today](#) to let us know how you'd like to celebrate with us!

#### **Giving Program**

Plan a Giving Program at your workplace, civic club, country club, professional association, or neighborhood/friend group. Start today and create a group that is committed to donate monthly from now until December— we'll take care of the details! On December 8, 2023, join us for breakfast to hear about the incredible change you have made. We will announce and celebrate the group that donated the highest amount.

#### **Break the Barrier Breakfast**

Organize a holiday breakfast for your close friends or coworkers and invite us to come speak about the stories of our amazing children and how you can make a difference in their lives. Break the barriers they face by bringing a bus pass, gift card for food, or a journal to the breakfast. A bus pass ensures a child can get to therapy and school, a gift card ensures they have food during school break, and a journal is a wonderful coping tool for youth struggling over the holidays. (Lunch or Dinner works too!) [Book us soon](#) before the dates are filled!

#### **Be the Change. Be a trendsetter. BE AN INSPIRATION**

Be a changemaker at your workplace by proposing that your workplace forgo the holiday lunches, galas, or dinners. Instead, ask your workplace to support our youth by donating the amount typically spent on these holiday gatherings. We can also help provide the information and tools to set a donation goal for your workplace. The amount you forgo can make real and lasting change in the life of a child.\*

*\*Did you know that \$500 provides 10 children with trauma-informed mental health and education assessments? \$2,500 restores safety, stability, and security for a sibling group caught in a high-conflict custody battle— and \$8,216 covers the full daily cost for all services at Council.*

#### **Have all of your holiday shopping done on December 8th!**

Block your calendar now! Join us for breakfast and bring your address book! In lieu of gifts this year, make a donation in honor of your friends and family. During the holiday season, let that person know that they have inspired change in the life of a child, a legacy that will not be forgotten. This gift will be memorialized in a beautiful card delivered to your loved ones. All of your holiday shopping can be done in just one hour while you drink hot coffee, eat pastries, and hear about the impact you are making on the life of a child. Make it a stress free holiday season— bring the addresses of your loved ones and Council staff will address and mail the cards that day on your behalf to ensure your gift arrives on time!

Email our team at [advancement@cfcrights.org](mailto:advancement@cfcrights.org) for more information and to book your celebration today!



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