

March 31, 2021

The Honorable Governor Asa Hutchinson
Arkansas State Capitol
Suite 250
500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Governor Hutchinson:

To protect the lives of vulnerable youth, the 50 physician members of the Arkansas Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the nearly 10,000 members of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry write in strong opposition to HB1570, and we ask that you veto the legislation.

We believe that this bill reflects a gross misunderstanding of what gender-affirming treatment entails for Arkansas' youth and will make it increasingly difficult to retain and recruit child and adolescent psychiatrists, further reducing access to specialized mental health care for all children in Arkansas.

Banning access to evidence-based treatments for youth creates a concerning precedent by allowing legislation to overstep into the physician-patient relationship by interfering with personal medical decisions and individualized treatment plans best left developed between treating physician, patient, and family. The optimal way to provide treatment for transgender patients and those with gender dysphoria is through a variety of possible interventions based on current medical evidence, which is individualized and methodical.

Evidence-based medical treatment for transgender youth and patients with gender dysphoria is supported by all mainstream pediatric organizations, representing thousands of physicians across multiple disciplines. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, Pediatric Endocrine Society, American Psychological Association, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine all support appropriately assessing the mental health *and* medical treatments for these youth. There are also increasingly well-evidenced, recognized medical guidelines and standards of care which make clear that an assessment to determine the decision-making capacity for a given young person is crucial before anything irreversible is started.

Child and adolescent psychiatrists are physicians who have completed four years of medical school, followed by three to four years of additional residency training in general adult psychiatry and two years of subspecialty fellowship training in child and adolescent psychiatry. We treat children and adolescents with mental health needs throughout the state of Arkansas, including gender diverse and transgender patients and their families, and refer these patients to one of the few gender clinics in the country.

Disallowing physicians to refer patients to gender-affirming care will make it more difficult to recruit additional, and much needed, child and adolescent psychiatrists to practice medicine in Arkansas. We have a severe shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists. Sixty-six counties in our state have no practicing child and adolescent psychiatrist. Included below is a map indicating the shortage of the subspecialty in Arkansas, for your reference.

Should HB1570 become law, the lives of some of our patients will be put at risk. Gender diverse youth, as well as adults, who identify as transgender have high rates of mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide in large part due to adverse experiences and stigma resulting from their gender identity. **Suicide is the second leading cause of death of all adolescents in the U.S., and rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among youth who identify as transgender are approximately three times that of their cisgender (or not transgender) peers.** When targeted by seriously misguided legislation such as HB1570, transgender youth in Arkansas are likely to internalize the harmful rhetoric surrounding the bill, as well as face a disruption of affirming health care, and have additional or more severe mental health disorders, as well as shame and guilt, as a result.

Gender nonconforming children and adolescents experience unique developmental challenges and need supportive adults in their lives who can create affirming, caring environments to help them become healthy adults. **As professionals who care for the youth of Arkansas and their families, we ask that you do not undermine our ability to combat the damage of depression, anxiety, and suicidality among a targeted segment of our population.**

We ask that you consider the mental and physical health of Arkansas youth and their families by vetoing HB1570.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Panek MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "K", "P", and "M" being particularly prominent.

Kathryn Panek, MD
President, Arkansas Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

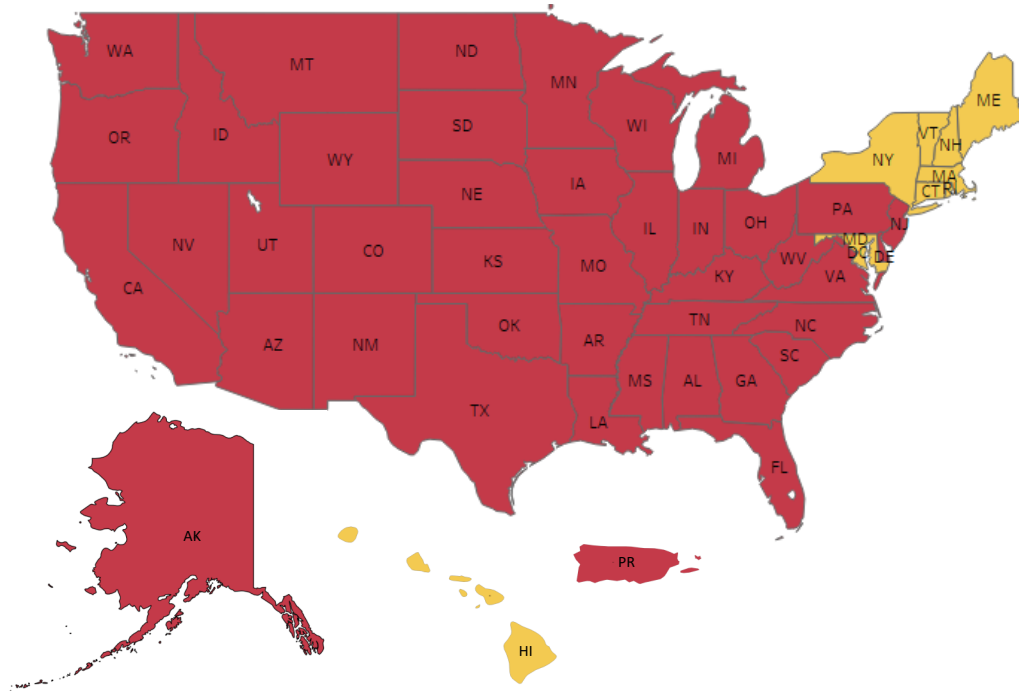
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle A. Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD
President, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

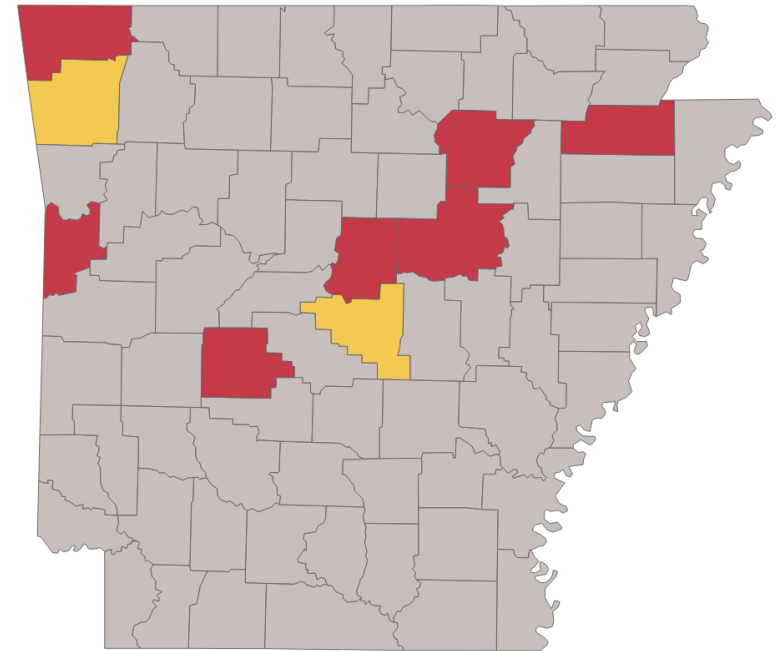
ARKANSAS

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist (CAP) Workforce Distribution Map

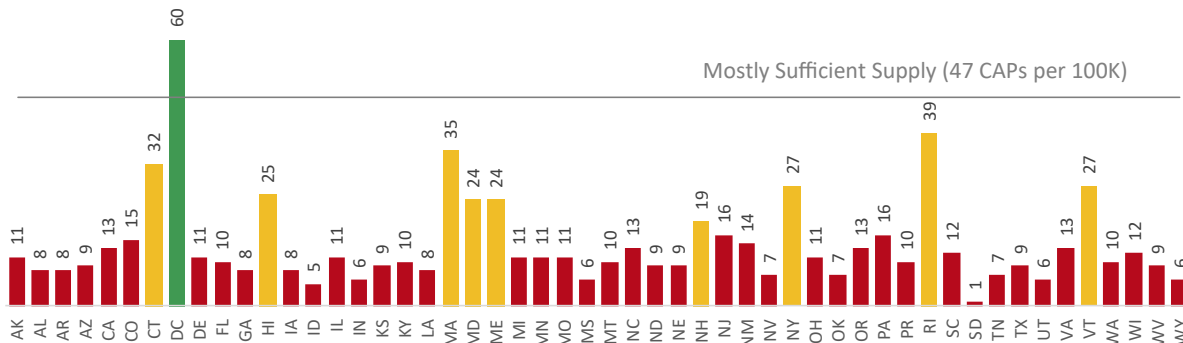
Practicing Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists by State 2017
Rate per 100,000 children age 0-17



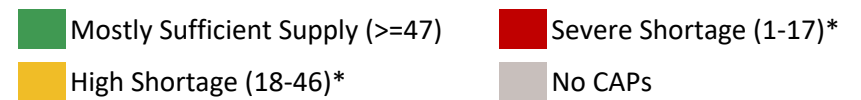
Practicing Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists by County 2017
Rate per 100,000 children age 0-17



State CAPs per 100,000 children age 0-17



CAPs Per 100K Children



*Council on Graduate Medical Education. Re-examination of the Academy of Physician Supply made in 1980 by the Graduate Medical Education National Advisory Committee for selected specialties, Bureau of Health Professions in support of activities of the Council on Graduate Medical Education. 1990. Cambridge, ABT Associates.

**Kim WJ, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Task Force on Workforce Needs. Child and adolescent psychiatry workforce: A critical shortage and national challenge. Acad Psychiatry. 2003;27:277-82.

Last Updated: March 2018

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|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Population of Children Under 18 | Total CAPs in Arkansas | Number of CAPs/100,000 Children | Average Age of CAPs |
| 703,794 | 57 | 8 | 48 |

| County | Total CAPs | Population, Children Under 18 |
|------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Arkansas | 0 | 4,292 |
| Ashley | 0 | 4,925 |
| Baxter | 0 | 7,250 |
| Benton | 3 | 66,505 |
| Boone | 0 | 8,275 |
| Bradley | 0 | 2,607 |
| Calhoun | 0 | 1,020 |
| Carroll | 0 | 6,132 |
| Chicot | 0 | 2,567 |
| Clark | 0 | 4,425 |
| Clay | 0 | 3,208 |
| Cleburne | 0 | 5,043 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 1,940 |
| Columbia | 0 | 5,179 |
| Conway | 0 | 4,862 |
| Craighead | 4 | 25,564 |
| Crawford | 0 | 15,550 |
| Crittenden | 0 | 13,890 |
| Cross | 0 | 4,263 |
| Dallas | 0 | 1,810 |
| Desha | 0 | 3,139 |
| Drew | 0 | 4,187 |
| Faulkner | 2 | 28,575 |
| Franklin | 0 | 4,228 |
| Fulton | 0 | 2,462 |

| County | Total CAPs | Population, Children Under 18 |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Garland | 1 | 20,202 |
| Grant | 0 | 4,221 |
| Greene | 0 | 10,722 |
| Hempstead | 0 | 5,858 |
| Hot Spring | 0 | 7,133 |
| Howard | 0 | 3,493 |
| Independence | 1 | 8,884 |
| Izard | 0 | 2,499 |
| Jackson | 0 | 3,546 |
| Jefferson | 0 | 16,770 |
| Johnson | 0 | 6,336 |
| Lafayette | 0 | 1,462 |
| Lawrence | 0 | 3,762 |
| Lee | 0 | 1,929 |
| Lincoln | 0 | 2,496 |
| Little River | 0 | 2,861 |
| Logan | 0 | 4,912 |
| Lonoke | 0 | 18,869 |
| Madison | 0 | 3,710 |
| Marion | 0 | 2,898 |
| Miller | 0 | 10,561 |
| Mississippi | 0 | 11,937 |
| Monroe | 0 | 1,596 |
| Montgomery | 0 | 1,789 |
| Nevada | 0 | 1,971 |

| County | Total CAPs | Population, Children Under 18 |
|-------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Newton | 0 | 1,590 |
| Ouachita | 0 | 5,634 |
| Perry | 0 | 2,252 |
| Phillips | 0 | 5,374 |
| Pike | 0 | 2,543 |
| Poinsett | 0 | 5,745 |
| Polk | 0 | 4,758 |
| Pope | 0 | 14,371 |
| Prairie | 0 | 1,727 |
| Pulaski | 33 | 93,085 |
| Randolph | 0 | 3,966 |
| St. Francis | 0 | 6,157 |
| Saline | 0 | 27,503 |
| Scott | 0 | 2,576 |
| Searcy | 0 | 1,583 |
| Sebastian | 1 | 31,254 |
| Sevier | 0 | 4,981 |
| Sharp | 0 | 3,589 |
| Stone | 0 | 2,509 |
| Union | 0 | 9,690 |
| Van Buren | 0 | 3,387 |
| Washington | 10 | 55,120 |
| White | 2 | 18,613 |
| Woodruff | 0 | 1,498 |
| Yell | 0 | 5,414 |