



Collaborative on Child Homelessness - IL (COCHI) Summer Newsletter

July 2026

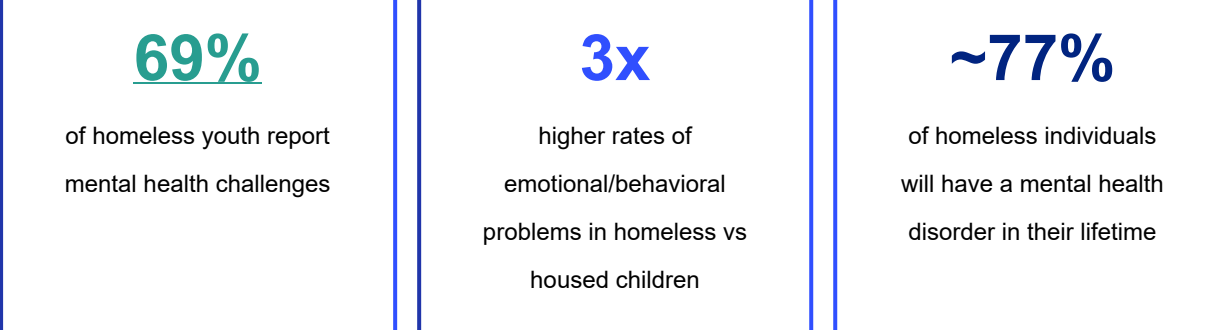
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In this issue, COCHI shines a light on the intersection of housing instability and mental health, with a particular focus on LGBTQ+ youth and the critical role of trauma-informed care. In this issue, we review relevant data, helpful resources, and advocacy updates to support our multi-sector community of practitioners and advocates.

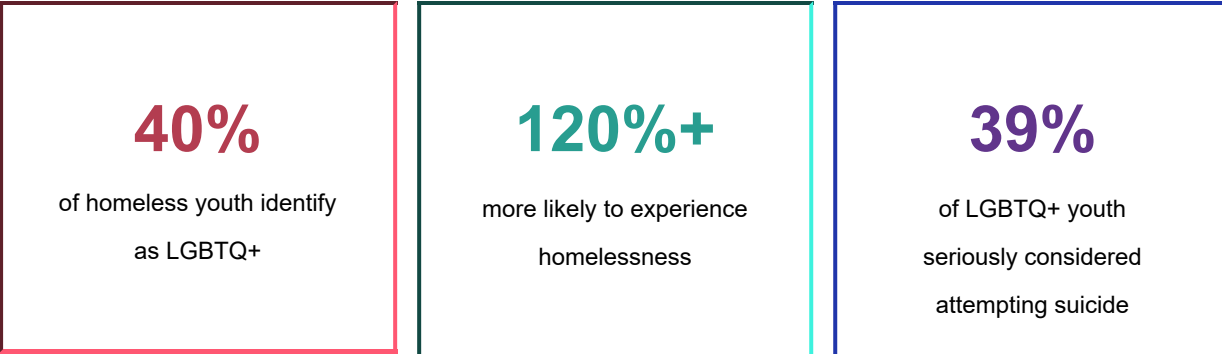
Lifelong Impacts of Housing Insecurity on Mental Health

Children experiencing homelessness or housing instability face elevated rates of anxiety, depression, behavioral disorders, post-traumatic stress, and developmental delays. The chronic stress of housing insecurity activates the body's stress response systems in ways that can impair cognitive development, emotional regulation, and school readiness. These effects can persist into adulthood if not addressed early.



LGBTQ+ Youth: At the Intersection of Housing and Mental Health

LGBTQ+ youth face homelessness at far higher rates than their peers, driven by family rejection, peer victimization, and discrimination in schools and public settings. Once homeless, LGBTQ+ youth face compounding risks, including elevated rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, and sex trafficking.



Summer Highlights

Meeting People Where They Are: Mental Health First Aid and Trauma-Informed Care in Housing Settings
COCHI's Quarterly Meeting on June 24, 2026 featured Dr. Sam Jackson, Clinical Director of Psychiatry at Erie Family Health and Street Psychiatrist. Thank you to The Night Ministry for hosting us and to everyone who took time out of their day to attend.



[View Slides and Notes](#)

Applying Trauma-Informed Care with LGBTQ+ Youth:

LGBTQ+ individuals often experience trauma as gender or sexual minorities. Providers can support healing by:

- Understanding how identity-based trauma affects cognition, emotion, behavior, and perception
- Creating an inclusive environment. Updating intake forms to be gender-inclusive, establishing visible safe space signals, and developing anti-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity
- Collaborating with LGBTQ+ clients in program design, service planning, and policy development
- Providing culturally relevant education and connecting youth to LGBTQ+-affirming community resources
- Avoiding re-traumatization by using inclusive language and avoiding assumptions about family structure or identity

Heat Wave: Chicago Cooling Centers and Tips for Staying Cool

Extreme weather can be detrimental to individuals living on the street or with unstable housing. View the resources below for ways to stay cool.

- [DFSS Cooling Centers \(activated above 90 degrees\)](#)
- [How to Help the Homeless in a Heat Wave](#)
- [Tips for Staying Cool in Extreme Heat](#)

Resources for Supporting Mental Health

ICAAP's mental health resources include tools for implementing cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), anxiety management, and other evidence-based behavioral health interventions, all of which can be adapted for trauma-informed and LGBTQ+-affirming practice.



CBT and Relaxation Techniques

Help families understand CBT skills, including deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and mindfulness. These skills help reduce stress, calm the body, and manage overwhelming emotions.

Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

Suicide Prevention – Protective Factors

Encourage children to take care of themselves and their well-being through open conversations about their mental health. As a trusted adult in their life, there are activities you can help them do or learn about to reduce their risk of suicide.

Policy Update

Medicaid Work Requirements

Starting in January 2027, new federal rules may affect some Medicaid customers. Some adults may need to work, go to school, engage in community service, or participate in training to get or to keep Medicaid coverage. Requirements vary by individual circumstances, and many will be exempt. Stay updated [here](#).

Effective July 1, 2026: Universal Lead Testing for All Children in Illinois

Effective July 1, all Illinois ZIP codes will be covered under state law calling for precautionary testing to ensure children are not harmed by exposure to lead. This change is the culmination of a years-long effort to expand the number of children who receive such testing and identify children in need of intervention earlier. See the announcement from [IDPH](#) for more information.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Birth to Five Illinois Region 1A (City of Chicago) is Hiring for a Regional Administrative Support Position!

The Regional Administrative Support will provide administrative assistance to the Regional Office, manage projects of all sizes, assist with the communications and meeting logistics for the Region's Action and Family Councils, work with internal staff to compile regional data, input data, and maintain databases, and fulfill other duties as assigned. View the posting and description [here](#).

COCHI Quarterly Meeting - September 23, 1-2 p.m

Our next quarterly meeting will be held virtually and feature speakers on mandated reporting and DCFS family preservation and reunification services. [Register here!](#)

Refugee Immigrant Child Health Initiative (RICHI) and COCHI Summer Event

Healthcare providers have witnessed firsthand how increased ICE activity and cruel policies affect children's mental and physical well-being. This takes a toll on your mental health as well, and clinicians often forget to take care of themselves during these times. RICHI and COCHI want to make space for self-care, connection, and supporting each other. Join us for an evening of community building, hygiene kit packing for those experiencing homelessness, and most importantly, fun! [Register here](#).



COCHI Leader Spotlight

Each newsletter, a different COCHI Leadership Team Member and their organization will be featured.

Laura Kuever is the Executive Director of Lake County Services at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago where she has been employed since 2005. Laura's oversight includes all programming based in Lake County and the external partnership lead for the Lake County community. Laura holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Carthage College and a master's degree in social work from Loyola University Chicago. Laura has been licensed as a clinical social worker since 2009 and certified as an alcohol and drug counselor since 2005.



The Catholic Charities Counseling Program provides outpatient community mental health counseling throughout the region, offering both in-person and telehealth services, with a focus on serving across the lifespan. The Encompassing Center is a community-funded counseling center in Chicago's westside that is operated by Catholic Charities. The center provides outreach, counseling, and case management to residents of the Near Westside, North Lawndale, and East and West Garfield Park. The Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (Loss) Program provides counseling and support services to individuals who are grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide. The Loss Program addresses the unique needs of children, Adolescents, and adults impacted by the suicide of a family member or person close to them

For more info, e-mail counselingintake@catholiccharities.net or call 312-655-7725.

Contact and More Information

Mental Health Resources

[Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Stay Connected

Join the COCHI mailing list for updates on COCHI meetings, trainings, and advocacy.

Email Abby.Creeke

Together, we can ensure every Illinois child has the stable home they deserve.

