

Resources to Improve Emergency Department Care for Children Experiencing Mental & Behavioral Health Emergencies

Compiled by the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in July 2026

Emergency departments (EDs) serve as a critical safety net for children and adolescents experiencing mental and behavioral health crises. To support clinicians and health systems in delivering timely, safe, and high-quality care, a wide range of evidence-based toolkits and educational materials have been developed. The following curated resources bring together practical tools to maintain patient and staff safety, conduct screening and risk assessment, promote patient and family-centered care, educate staff, and improve care for children experiencing boarding. These publicly available, free resources can equip EDs to better meet the complex needs of youth experiencing mental health emergencies while promoting compassionate, standardized, and equitable care.

Featured Resources

New England Regional Behavioral Health Toolkit

The toolkit contains (1) a self-directed activities binder for youth and a guide for EDs to purchase activity supplies, (2) a behavioral health training video series, and (3) a bundle of tools to support the care of children experiencing behavioral health boarding in the ED (e.g., intake form, tracking form, handoff tool, room safety checklist, coping tool, daily schedule, patient expectations handout).

[Access the Toolkit](#)

Pediatric Education and Advocacy Kits (PEAK) on Suicide and Agitation

Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Innovation and Improvement Center (EIIC)

A collection of best practice education resources (videos, practice guidelines, infographics, podcasts) to learn how to screen for pediatric suicide risk and assess acuity, how to develop safety plans, and to support children and youth with agitation—including identifying the etiology of agitation and initiating management strategies.

[Access the PEAK Toolkit](#)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Facts for Families Guide

A collection of fact sheets that provide concise and up-to-date information on mental health issues that affect children, teenagers, and their families.

[Access AACAP Facts for Families Guide](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Policy Statement and Technical Report: The Management of Children and Youth with Mental Health Emergencies

Highlights strategies, resources, and recommendations for improving emergency care delivery for pediatric mental and behavioral health.

[Policy Statement](#) | [Technical Report](#)

EMSC EIIC The ED Screening and Treatment Options for Pediatric (STOP) Suicide Quality Improvement (QI) Collaborative

This QI Collaborative focused on strengthening clinical care processes to improve the care of children and adolescents presenting to EDs with suicidal thoughts and behaviors. This resource provides access to archived monthly learning session recordings, presentation slides, and optional fireside chat discussions.

[Access the STOP Suicide QI Sessions Archive](#)

Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) Infographic

ENA is the leading organization that represents emergency nursing professionals, focusing on improving patient care and supporting the specialty. This infographic from the ENA provides tips for providing safe structure for pediatric mental health patients in the ED.

[Access ENA Infographic](#)

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Critical Crossroads: Pediatric Mental Health Care in the Emergency Department

This document contains literature references and tools that can be used to support the creation of care pathways to improve triage, screening, ongoing assessment, and disposition of children who present to the ED in a mental health crisis.

[Access Critical Crossroads](#)

Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP)

The Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, also known as ICAAP, is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization made up of over 2,000 pediatricians in Illinois. As an organization, we work to build stronger communities by improving health care for children in our state.

Firearm Injury Prevention Resources

[Access Firearm Injury Prevention Resources](#)

About half of youth suicides occur by firearms. The following resources can help clinicians discuss safe firearm storage practices with families.

- [Firearm Storage Take Home](#)
patient-facing handout
- [Storing Dangerous Household Items Poster](#)
patient-facing handout
- [Where to Find Free Gun Locks in Illinois](#)
for institutions and families
- [Secure Firearm Storage Tips](#)
patient-facing handout

Youth Suicide Prevention Materials

[Access Youth Suicide Prevention Materials](#)

- [Help Protect Children from Suicide](#)
patient-facing handout

Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Improving Behavioral Health in the Emergency Department and Upstream

Actionable guidance for hospital EDs and their community partners to create a compassionate, seamless, and effective system of care for mental health and substance use disorder patients who present to the ED. **Note:** This resource is not pediatric-specific.

[Access the White Paper](#)

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Ask Suicide- Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit

A toolkit to support screening youth for suicide risk using the ASQ, including a script to introduce the screening tool, the screening tool in multiple languages, training/educational videos, an interview guide to conduct a risk assessment for children who screen positive, parent/guardian flyers, and care pathways.

[Access the ASQ Toolkit](#)

National Pediatric Readiness Project (NPRP) Toolkit

A comprehensive, evidence-based resource designed to help EDs strengthen and sustain their ability to care for children. The toolkit provides practical guidance and resources to help EDs improve Pediatric Readiness. **Note:** This resource is not specific to behavioral health care.

[Access NPRP Toolkit](#)

Pediatric Emergency Care Coordinator (PECC) Resource Modules

Modules cover information about PECCs, also called Pediatric Quality Coordinators or pediatric champions, and how they can impact policies, equipment, and other resources needed to provide high-quality emergency care for children. **Note:** This resource is not specific to behavioral health care.

[Access the Modules](#)

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Technical Assistance (TA) Toolkit

A toolkit designed to help PMHCA awardees enhance collaboration between EDs, pediatricians, and mental health providers. It provides practical guidance, workflows, and QI strategies to improve responses for children in mental and behavioral health crises. Teams can use this toolkit as a roadmap for identifying opportunities within the ED.

[Access the PMHCA TA Toolkit](#)

Suicide Risk Assessment Physician Simulation

The physician simulation supports participants in completing an evidence-based suicide risk assessment, identifying level of risk, and developing an appropriate safety plan. Two physician booklets and one branching video were created to reflect the assessment approach used at each site, either BSSA or SAFE-T, while maintaining shared core content around safety planning and difficult conversations.

[Access the SimBox: Suicide Risk Assessment](#)

Suicide Screen Nursing Simulation

The nursing simulation focuses on helping participants communicate the purpose of suicide screening, complete the appropriate screening workflow, and respond effectively to positive screens. Two nurse booklets and one branching video were developed to align the experience with the screening tool used at each site, either ASQ or C-SSRS.

[Access the SimBox: Suicide Screening](#)