



ICAAP Pediatric Mental Health Programming Portfolio

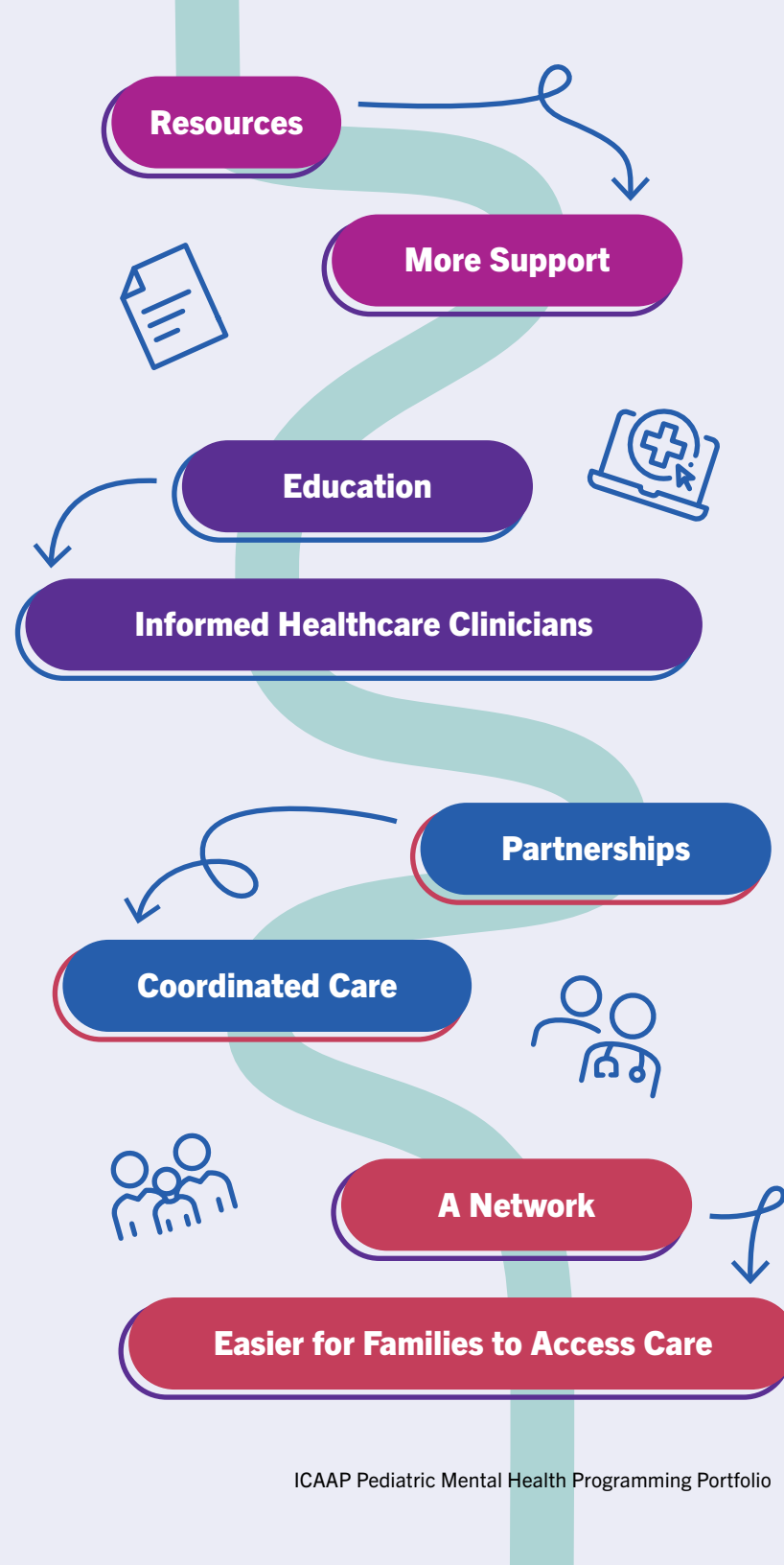


Children, families, pediatric clinicians, and health systems continue to face an urgent and sustained children's mental health crisis across Illinois. Limited access to specialized care, rising patient needs, and insufficient systematic support have placed extraordinary pressure on pediatric primary care. Pediatricians and pediatric clinicians have been called upon to screen, intervene, coordinate care, and support families in ways that extend beyond traditional primary care training. Since 2023, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) has been funded to help ensure pediatric professionals are better equipped to meet children's mental health needs and that families can access compassionate, timely, and effective support. While progress has been made, challenges facing children's mental health care in Illinois remain significant.

As the President of ICAAP, I am proud to share this pediatric mental health programming portfolio as both a reflection of ICAAP's commitment to pediatricians, and a call to continued action. This document outlines the breadth of ICAAP's work to strengthen pediatric mental health care across Illinois, including strategic partnerships, needs assessments, clinician education, quality improvement initiatives, peer support, emergency department resources, family-facing tools, communications, and advocacy. It demonstrates how ICAAP is responding to today's needs while helping build a more sustainable system of care for the future. Most importantly, it reflects our belief that every child in Illinois deserves access to the mental health support they need, and every pediatric clinician deserves the tools, training, and systems necessary to provide that care.



Anita Chandra-Puri, MD, FAAP
President



Statewide Partnerships and Systems Alignment

ICAAP partners across public health, clinical, education, and community systems to align pediatric mental health efforts and expand their reach across Illinois. ICAAP is a partner on the Illinois Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Expansion (PMHCA) project, led by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) through programs authorized by Congress, including the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Other Illinois PMHCA partners include the University of Illinois Chicago's College of Medicine and Illinois DocAssist (IDA).



Other partnerships that impact children's mental health include:

- Alliance Chicago: ICAAP is on the committee for Improving the System for Timely Referrals: Youth at Risk for Suicide.
- ECHO-Chicago: ICAAP collaborates on mental health training initiatives.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): Supports ICAAP's Quality Improvement projects and ICAAP works to support and amplify mental health initiatives from the AAP.
 - The Chapter has an **AAP Suicide Prevention Ambassador**, Nabil Abou Baker, MD, FAAP - University of Chicago
- Illinois Department of Public Health: ICAAP participates in the Illinois Partnership for Safety (IPS) Firearm Safety Committee and the Children's Mental Health Partnership
- Start Early
- Illinois Healthcare and Family Services
- Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
- Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative
- Illinois Association of School Nurses
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans
- Everthrive Illinois



Workgroups and Committees

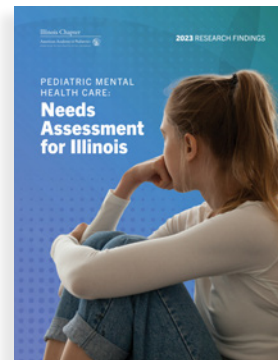
ICAAP's pediatric mental health portfolio is strengthened by workgroups and committees that bring together pediatric clinicians, mental health champions, and cross-sector partners from across Illinois. These groups help ensure ICAAP's programming remains responsive to clinical needs and grounded in statewide perspectives. Members provide guidance on educational materials, resource development, media campaigns, event planning, and other program activities, supporting a collaborative approach to building pediatric mental health capacity throughout Illinois.



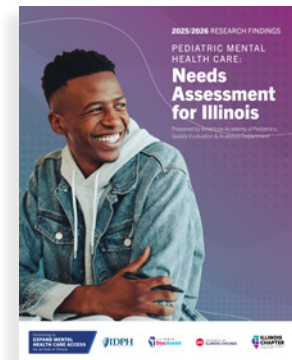
Needs Assessment and Data-Informed Planning

ICAAP uses needs assessments, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder feedback to guide its mental health programming and ensure that resources reflect the realities of pediatric practice in Illinois. Between April and July 2023, ICAAP conducted a comprehensive needs assessment survey with coordinating focus groups to identify priorities for addressing pediatric mental health care. The findings informed the foundation and content areas for ICAAP's pediatric mental health webinars and trainings in 2024 and 2025.

Between December 2025 and February 2026, ICAAP conducted a follow-up needs assessment targeting the same population: pediatric primary care clinicians and subspecialists practicing in Illinois. The follow-up assessment confirmed gains in clinician confidence, clinic infrastructure, and Illinois DocAssist utilization, while also identifying persistent structural barriers and emerging needs, including post-screening follow-up systems, trauma-informed care, and clinician burnout. This ongoing feedback loop helps ICAAP keep its programs responsive to clinician and child health needs statewide.



[2023 Needs Assessment ›](#)



[2025-26 Needs Assessment ›](#)

Clinician Training and Continuing Education

ICAAP creates a wide variety of educational resources, materials, and events for pediatric clinicians across the state.

Webinars

ICAAP hosts several webinars via Zoom per year. Each webinar offers continuing medication education (CME) credit and is open to pediatric clinicians and healthcare workers across the state. Webinar recordings and resources are uploaded to ICAAP's Learning Management System (LMS) for enduring credit.

During 2025 and early 2026, ICAAP hosted webinars on:

- Collaboration Between School Health & Pediatric Primary Care in Youth Mental Health
- Social Media & Youth Mental Health
- Supporting the Mental Health Needs of LGBTQ+ Youth

In the fall of 2024, ICAAP hosted a series of four webinars addressing pediatric mental health in the primary health care setting. The series provided participants with an overview of foundational topics in pediatric mental health, diagnosis, and management of common and complex mental health conditions. Each webinar was accompanied by an opportunity for peer-to-peer collaboration hosted by webinar faculty during the same week as each session, with additional time for participant Q&A.

Topics included:

- Foundations of Pediatric Mental Health
- Diagnoses of Common Pediatric Mental Health Conditions
- Management of Pediatric Mental Health Conditions
- Management of Complex Presentation



Extension for Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) Sessions

ICAAP frequently partners with ECHO-Chicago to host mental health-related ECHO training programs. The series aims to train pediatric providers in implementing evidence-based, patient-centered best practices for pediatric mental health topics. Sessions are held virtually and comprise a short didactic and role-play simulation, followed by at least two participant-led case presentations. All ECHOs are CME-accredited.

Recent ECHOs include:

2025

Pediatric ADHD
Childhood Adversity and Trauma

2024

Youth Suicide Prevention
Suicide Prevention in Youth
ECHO Series Resources





Pediatric Mental Health Conference

Since 2025, ICAAP has hosted an annual Pediatric Mental Health Conference in partnership with IDA. This full-day, in-person event brings together physicians, nurses, therapists, social workers, and allied health professionals committed to improving pediatric mental health care across Illinois. A small conference planning committee is selected to help determine topics, find speakers, and help with promotion. Conferences are CME accredited and offer Social Work continuing education credits.

[Review Conference Presentations >](#)

Year One

May 5, 2025

5.5

CME credits
offered

96

attended
(114 registered)

Year Two

May 7, 2026

6

CME credits
offered

110

attended
(130 registered)

Quality Improvement and Practice Transformation

In partnership with the AAP, ICAAP hosts American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Part 4 accredited projects. Participating clinical teams engage in monthly educational sessions, complete de-identified retrospective chart reviews, and submit PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) worksheets. ICAAP has recently led two MOC Part 4 projects around mental health. Both focused on enhancing identification and management of pediatric anxiety in primary care by implementing standardized screening processes, structured follow-up, and education using quality improvement tools.

[Read the 2026 Final Report >](#)

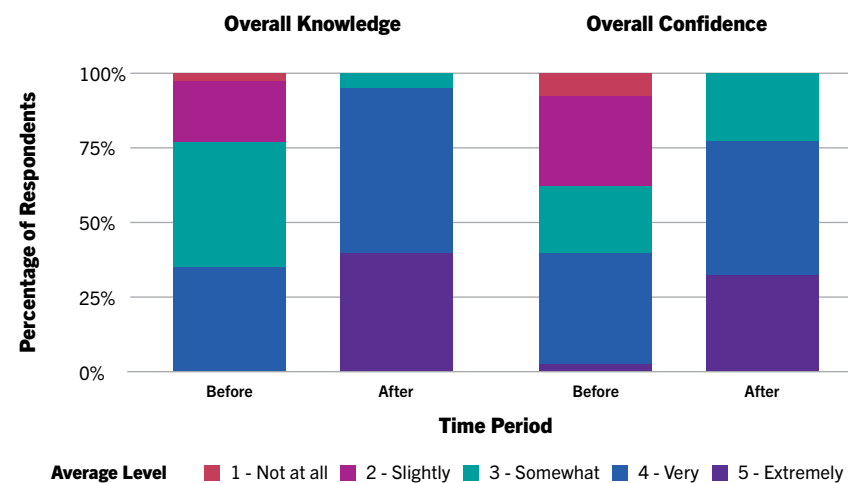
[Read the 2025 Final Report >](#)

2026 QI Project: Self-reported knowledge and confidence, before and after the project (mean rating, 1 to 5)

Item	Before	After	p-value
Knowledge			
Common presentations of anxiety in pediatric patients	3.00	4.00	0.008
Scoring and interpretation of validated screening tools	3.12	4.38	0.016
Common differential diagnoses for pediatric anxiety	2.88	4.12	0.008
Medication management for pediatric anxiety	3.12	4.00	0.031
Brief CBT-based coping strategies	2.62	3.75	0.031
Confidence			
Screening patients ages 11-17 with a validated tool	3.12	4.38	0.031
Conducting structured follow-up assessment for differential diagnoses	3.12	4.12	0.031
Developing a follow-up plan for a positive screen	3.38	4.38	0.031
Managing medications for pediatric anxiety	3.25	4.00	0.063
Conducting a PDSA cycle	2.62	3.75	0.008

p-values from Wilcoxon signed-rank tests (n = 8 paired responses per item).

2025 QI Project: Overall Knowledge and Confidence Before vs. After the Quality Improvement Project. Each domain is a combined average across all skills.



Clinician-Facing Materials

As needs are identified, ICAAP works to create clinical tools that are helpful to pediatricians and their practices.

Examples of these include:

- Medication Quick-Reference Charts
 - › [ADHD Medication Chart for Preschool Children \(Ages 3-5\)](#)
 - › [ADHD Medication Chart for Children Ages 6+](#)
 - › [Anxiety and Depression Medication Chart for Preschool Children \(Ages 3-5\)](#)
 - › [Anxiety and Depression Medication Chart for Children Ages 6+](#)
- [Resources to Improve Emergency Department Care](#) - Handout
- [Know the Signs of Youth Suicide](#) - Clinic Poster



Peer Support

ICAAP has convened seven clinicians from across the state to serve as mental health peer advisors, ready to support clinician needs and provide guidance. ICAAP's mental health peer advisors do not provide case consultation; rather, they provide support to clinicians and practices working to integrate mental health care screening and delivery into the primary care setting. Clinicians can fill out the [contact form](#) to reach an advisor.

Emergency Department Initiatives

Emergency Department (ED) Survey

In 2025, ICAAP conducted a large survey of pediatric quality managers and ED nurse managers to understand current and desired resources to care for children presenting to Illinois EDs with behavioral health concerns. Content areas of the survey included behavioral health policies and procedures, triage, screening, assessment (with particular attention to availability of tele-mental health services), disposition, and desired resources to improve care. The insights gained from this contributed to the development of resources, guidelines, and training programs that address the specific needs of EDs, particularly in non-children's hospitals.

A manuscript about the survey findings was published in Journal of the American College of Emergency Physicians Open and can be found here: [Current and Desired Behavioral Health Resources for Children: A Survey of Illinois Emergency Departments](#)



SimBox

ICAAP worked with the Improving Pediatric Acute Care Through Simulation (ImPACTS) & SimBox team to create two simulation-based training cases, for suicide screening, assessment, and safety planning in EDs. They were created to address the need for pragmatic training resources that can be used in any ED without a simulation center or resources. Both cases emphasize integrating a safety plan and navigating difficult conversations during suicide risk assessment. These courses are brief, accessible from anywhere, pragmatic, and usable by non-sim experts.

➤ **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.

[SimBox: Suicide Screening ›](#)

➤ **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.

[SimBox: Suicide Risk Assessment ›](#)

Family and Community Resources

Email Courses for Parents and Caregivers

ICAAP creates patient and family-facing materials. In 2026, ICAAP launched two new parent email guides that offer clear, reliable information to support families navigating important developmental and mental health topics. Each is available in English and Spanish.

How it works: Pediatricians can enroll families directly, or parents and caregivers can enroll themselves. Once enrolled, they receive one email per day with clear, compassionate guidance developed by pediatricians. The courses are designed to be easy to digest for busy parents, with additional resources linked, in case they want to take a deeper dive!



Parent Guide to Pre-Teen & Teen Mental Health:

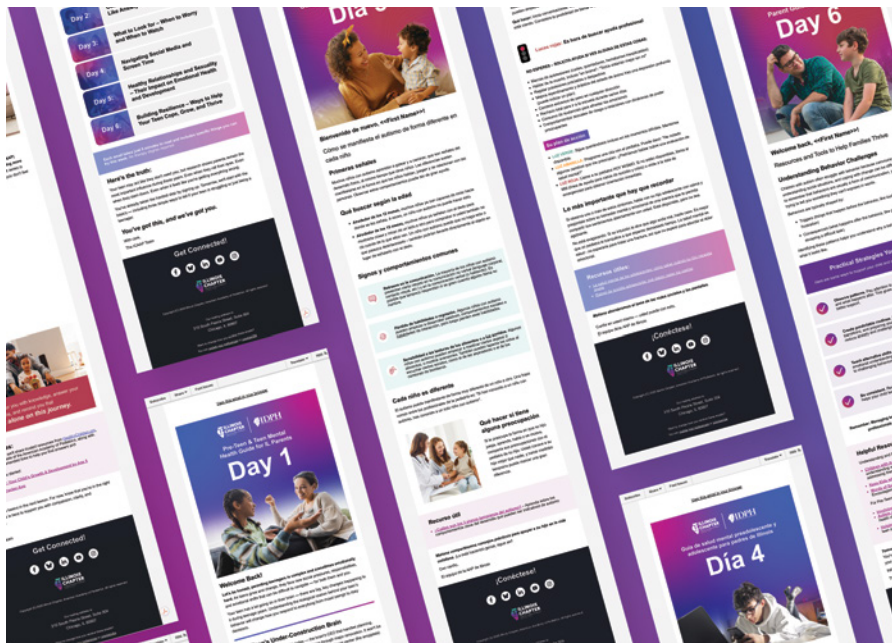
A 6-day series helping parents understand their teen's brain development, navigate social media and screen time, recognize warning signs, and build lasting resilience.

Sign up at [Illinoisap.org/teen-mental-health](https://illinoisap.org/teen-mental-health) ›

Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorder:

A week-long series walking parents through early signs, the diagnosis process, therapy access, school rights, and Illinois-specific resources.

Sign up at [Illinoisap.org/autism-guide](https://illinoisap.org/autism-guide) ›



Family- and Community-Facing Materials

ICAAP creates visually captivating and easily digestible handouts and posters to raise awareness of mental health trends, resources, and bring awareness to supports available in Illinois. These outreach materials are publicly available on ICAAP's website and can be distributed digitally or printed.

Anxiety Management Tools

- Handout: CBT and Relaxation Techniques
 - › [Download in English](#) | [Download in Spanish](#)
- Handout: Apps for Kids and Teens
 - › [Download in English](#) | [Download in Spanish](#)
- Handout: Books and Workbooks List
 - › [Download in English](#)

Grief Resources

- › [Download in English](#)

Suicide Prevention Resources

- [Know the Warning Signs of Suicide](#) - Handout
- [Help Protect Children from Suicide](#) - Handout





Social Media Toolkits

Pediatricians, clinicians, health systems, and public health professionals play a critical role in amplifying science-based, evidence-driven messaging that families can trust.

ICAAP develops ready-to-use social media toolkits with detailed posting guides and downloadable graphics so clinicians can simply download, copy, paste, and post.

Examples:

- [Suicide Awareness Month Social Campaign](#) (zip file)
- [Know the Warning Signs of Youth Firearm Suicide](#) (zip file)
- [Mental Health Awareness Month](#) (zip file)

[View More Toolkits >](#)

Communications

Bi-Monthly Newsletters & Illinois Pediatrician

ICAAP issues a bi-monthly newsletter to share key updates directly to ICAAP members' inboxes. Topics covered include CE/CME opportunities, mental health resources and guidance, educational webinars, upcoming events, data and trends in Illinois, state and partner initiatives, and more.

Summaries of ICAAP's Mental Health program activities are also featured in ICAAP's bi-annual publication, *Illinois Pediatrician*.





Advocacy and Policy Engagement

Advocacy is at the core of ICAAP's work to improve the health and well-being of children across Illinois. ICAAP elevates the needs of pediatric clinicians, children, and families by supporting policies, legislation, and system-level changes that strengthen access to timely, effective pediatric mental health care. This includes advocating for resources that help clinicians identify and respond to mental health concerns, connect families to appropriate services, and address persistent barriers in care. By pairing education and clinical support with statewide advocacy, ICAAP helps ensure children's mental health remains a priority in Illinois.



Contact

Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
 310 South Peoria Street, Suite 304
 Chicago, IL 60607
 Phone: 314-733-1026 | Fax: 312-733-1791
 Email: info@illinoisaaap.com
www.illinoisaaap.org

