

Youth Mental Health Corps

An AmeriCorps Program of the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership

THE FACTS

RISE IN POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Youth across the United States are facing an onslaught of societal pressures like never before, fueling depression, suicidal ideation, and a sense of hopelessness. Excessive screen time and social media use have compounded and accelerated poor mental health in teens.

CHALLENGES ACCESSING TREATMENT

In 2023, one in five adolescents had a diagnosed mental health condition. Among adolescents with a current diagnosis who needed counseling or treatment, 61% had difficulty accessing needed treatment (a 35% increase since 2018).¹

HEALTH WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Behavioral healthcare shortages are significant in the state and negatively impact access to care.

Many school-based clinics (particularly in rural settings) share a single provider that rotates between sites and even fewer have behavioral health staff available to address mental health concerns.



“We believe that youth and young adults (with the proper support and training) can be the answer to the multifaceted and pressing youth mental health and workforce needs facing our state.”

Mellie Boagni, ARHP President/CEO

The Youth Mental Health Corps is a new and upcoming local AmeriCorps Program designed to empower young adults (18-29) to support the mental health needs of their peers and near peers in an effort to break the cycle of mental health crisis in young Arkansans. During their 11-month service year, Youth Mental Health Corps members will be trained in evidence-based models (Mental Health First Aid- Teen & Youth, Community Health

Worker) and placed in partnering K-12 schools, technical colleges, universities, healthcare organizations and school-based clinics. New service-to-career pathways into the behavioral health profession will support understaffed schools and healthcare organizations with trained Youth Mental Health Corps members while providing an opportunity to work in a needed healthcare field and gain valuable certifications. Arkansas youth will benefit from increased access to relevant training, screening, and interventions related to mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention.