Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

The Behavioral Health Checklist: Helping Providers Measure Childhood Strengths and Resilience in 200 Words

Behavioral Health

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Up to 20% of youth in the U.S. have behavioral health difficulties, and many of them receive behavioral health care from their primary care clinician. To help clinicians identify the behavioral health needs of their patients in a valid, developmentally and culturally responsive way, we developed the Behavioral Health Checklist (BHCL).

The BHCL screens for anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In addition, and what makes this resource particularly unique, is that it includes a subscale to evaluate strengths or indicators of resilience—such as the ability to relate well to parents, teachers, and peers and to have self-control—which are important protective factors for children to have in the face of adversity. We know that resilience has its own impact on child functioning, separate from symptoms of behavioral health difficulties.

In a recent study, we found that higher levels of child strength may in fact buffer the harmful impact of psychopathology symptoms, such as disruptive behavior and anxiety, on social functioning. These findings suggest that the BHCL may be useful in identifying protective characteristics that can be strengthened to promote children's social success, and are particularly timely as the BHCL provides a method of screening for factors that can promote youth resilience during periods of high stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health

policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategic Operations & Communications Director Lauren Walens.

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