

# INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE

## Recommendations for Preventing Development of Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Youth

“The scientific foundation has been created for the nation to begin to create a society in which young people arrive at adulthood with the skills, interests, assets, and health habits needed to live healthy, happy, and productive lives in caring relationships with others.”

No concerted federal presence or clear national leadership currently exists to advance the use of prevention and promotion approaches to benefit the mental health of the nation’s young people.

Infusing a prevention focus into the public consciousness requires development of a shared public vision and attention at a higher national level than currently exists.

The federal government should make the healthy mental, emotional, and behavioral development of young people a national priority, establish public goals for the prevention of specific MEB disorders and for the promotion of healthy development among young people, and provide needed research and service resources to achieve these aims.

- The White House should create an ongoing mechanism involving federal agencies, stakeholders (including professional associations), and key researchers to develop and implement a strategic approach to the promotion of mental, emotional, and behavioral health and the prevention of MEB disorders and related problem behaviors in young people.
- The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice should be accountable for coordinating and aligning their resources, programs, and initiatives with this strategic approach and for encouraging their state and local counterparts to do the same.
- States and communities should develop networked systems to apply resources to the promotion of mental health and prevention of MEB disorders among their young people.
- These systems should involve individuals, families, schools, justice systems, health care systems, and relevant community-based programs.
- Such approaches should build on available evidence-based programs and involve local evaluators to assess the implementation process of individual programs or policies and to measure community-wide outcomes.

