



Report: Crisis in treating children's mental health needs

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Rochester, N.Y. - A new report published by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation finds there is a crisis in treating children's mental health needs in the Greater Rochester region.

"When you hear about three-year-olds being expelled from childcare settings because of emotional issues, that's pretty attention-getting," said John Urban, President & CEO of the Great Rochester Health Foundation.

The report finds about 15 to 20 percent of children between the ages of two and 18 experience a mental disorder, but of those only one in five see a doctor.

"There's very few of us as parents who want to acknowledge our child may have a mental health issue, and if we acknowledge that, we don't want them somehow labeled," said Urban.

That stigma is just one of many challenges.

The report further states a shortage of professionals trained to address mental health needs with access being highly problematic and an inconsistency in care.

"It's hard to get access if you're just calling from the community; there's long waits and challenges getting seen at all," said Dr. Michael Scharf, the Chief of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Rochester Medical Center, which the Health Foundation commissioned to do the study.

Dr. Scharf also points out, there's often a lack of communication among a child's school and primary care provider and other areas of behavioral observation in a child's life.