

# Kids Need More Mental Health Treatment, but Arkansas Won't Allow New Facilities or Additional Beds

## Moratorium Creates an Artificial Shortage of Facilities

Since 2008, Arkansas has prohibited adding beds to or constructing new psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs), 24-hour psychiatric facilities for children and adolescents between six and 21 years of age.

The state's own PRTF bed need calculation last updated on March 30, 2022, identifies an aggregate shortage of 53 beds across the state, including shortages of 62, 62, and 21 in three of the six designated areas.

The moratorium left Arkansas unable to effectively respond to events like the COVID-19 pandemic that caused increased mental health disorders among children and stressed hospital capacity in Arkansas because inpatient facilities were full.

Freezing the supply of beds and facilities since 2008 maintains a government-granted monopoly to the current facilities that can count on a steady stream of patients regardless of quality of care.

# 48<sup>TH</sup> IN THE NATION

For youth mental health, according to the United Health Foundation's 2021 annual health rankings

**“Mental health disorders now account for nearly 2.5 percent of emergency department visits at Little Rock-based Arkansas Children's Hospital, a 150 percent increase from pre-pandemic levels...Inpatient facilities are full and they're strapped for space and staff.”**

- Arkansas Children's Hospital CEO Marcy Doderer  
in a Sept. 2021 interview with Becker's Hospital Review

**“Right now for our teens, we have a state of mental health emergency.”**

- Dr. Buster Lackey, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness Arkansas to THV11 CBS News in Oct. 2021

**Arkansas is the only state with this kind of moratorium—other states have recently cut red tape for psychiatric services**

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, only 13 other states utilize moratoriums on health care services, and no other state maintains a moratorium on residential treatment facilities for adolescents. Multiple states have recently made changes to their Certificate of Need (“CON”) programs for psychiatric services. In Arkansas, this is known as Permits of Approval.

- Mississippi repealed its moratorium on child/adolescent psychiatric or chemical dependency beds in March 2021.
- Tennessee no longer requires a CON for psychiatric services after passing CON reform in 2021.
- Washington state extended its CON exemption for psychiatric facilities to 2023 to “alleviate the need to board psychiatric patients in emergency departments.”
- Florida eliminated CON requirements for numerous services including, “intensive residential treatment facilities services for children.”

A December 2021 study on psychiatric services (hospitals and inpatient) found that “CON laws targeting psychiatric services are associated with statistically significant fewer psychiatric hospitals per million residents (20% fewer) and 2.19 fewer inpatient psychiatric clients per ten thousand residents (56% fewer).”

UNMET BED NEED (MARCH 2022)

