

Strong Minds, Bright Futures

A Partnership for Child
Mental Wellbeing



As we reflect on **Mental Health Awareness Month** and look ahead to the work ahead of us, we're proud of the growth and momentum behind the [Strong Minds, Bright Futures Partnership](#)

With more than 60 partners across 30 counties and with leadership rooted in health care, education, and community advocacy, we are building a united effort to ensure children in Pennsylvania can grow up with the mental health services they need, when they need them. From policy wins to grassroots advocacy, we are proving that real change happens when families, providers, and leaders work together. Thank you for being part of this movement for stronger minds and brighter futures.

-Strong Minds, Bright Futures Co-Chairs

Reform Spotlight:



This Mental Health Awareness Month, and with Mother's Day on our minds, we're spotlighting a powerful way to support both children and caregivers: dyadic care. This proven, prevention-focused approach delivers mental health support to babies and their caregivers together—often during pediatric visits—so families get the help they need early, before crises arise.

By strengthening the parent-child bond and reducing caregiver stress, dyadic care helps families thrive. It's time for Pennsylvania to make this vital care accessible to all families enrolled in Medicaid.

Click the link to view Children First's webinar: ["Caring Together: Models for Improving the Mental Well-Being of Young Children & Families"](#)

PUBLIC STATEMENT: Cutting Funding to School Mental Health Services Threatens Essential Support for Pennsylvania's Children

The Strong Minds, Bright Futures Partnership strongly urges the Department of Education to reconsider the decision to cut \$1 billion in federal grants supporting school-based mental health services. These cuts will leave more than 250,000 students across Pennsylvania without essential mental health support, especially in communities already struggling with access. Families will lose access to critical school counselors, social workers, and programs designed to support student well-being and prevent youth suicide. These cuts will also reduce resources for addressing trauma and depression in children, making it harder to identify and support our children's healthy development.

Such cuts threaten vital services for children and should be considered essential, not expendable, and must not be categorized as waste or excess. They also highlight the instability of the child mental health system, which relies on temporary funding that fails to provide lasting support. The Strong Minds, Bright Futures Partnership remains committed to advocating for a reformed mental health system that provides long-term, sustainable funding to ensure children's mental health services are always available.

To learn more read this article from NPR: [Link](#)

Follow the link below created by our partner, Children First, to take action and contact your elected officials.

Tell Congress: NO CUTS TO MEDICAID

Story of the Month



This month, we're spotlighting Youth Infusion's NEPA Youth-Led Leadership Conference, where young advocates and leaders came together to discuss the urgent need for mental health support in schools. The conference empowered youth to drive change, creating a platform for them to amplify their voices and push for action.

"The voices of youth are often overlooked in the mental health conversation. At Youth Infusion, we're making sure our stories are heard and that real change follows." - Erika Almeida (Youth Infusion Co-founder & Executive Director)

[Learn More](#)

Recent Events & Happenings

Strong Minds, Bright Futures

Testifies in Support of Teen Mental Health Awareness Day

On May 21st, Strong Minds, Bright Futures partners attended the Delaware County Council Regular Meeting to testify in support of a proclamation recognizing Teen Mental Health Awareness Day.

The proclamation was introduced in response to a request from Sophia Palazzo-Riggins, a senior at Commonwealth Charter Academy and a dedicated member of the PA Youth Advocacy Network. Sophia urged Council to recognize the growing mental health needs of teens and the importance of year-round, sustained support.



In honoring her advocacy, Delaware County Council issued a formal proclamation committing to elevate youth mental health as a priority not just in words, but in action. The resolution highlights the urgent need for responsive, inclusive, and accessible mental health systems, particularly for students facing disproportionate challenges due to race, identity, or disability.

"Teen Mental Health Awareness Day is not just about raising awareness - it's about taking action," said Delaware County Council Chair Dr. Monica Taylor. "The data is clear: far too many of our young people are struggling, and they need support systems that are responsive, inclusive, and accessible"

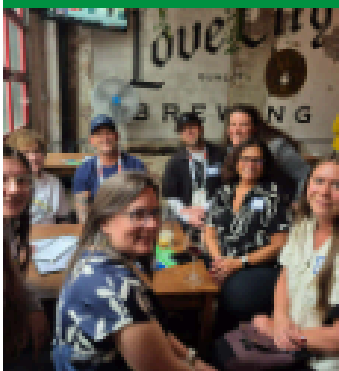
[You can catch up on the full testimony here](#)

Strong Minds Bright Futures NatCon Social Hour

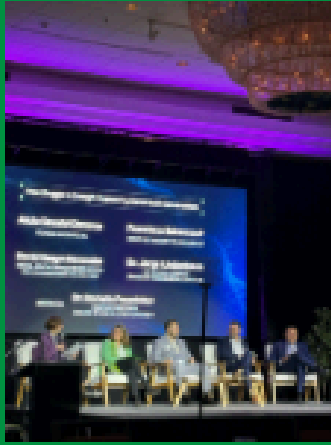


During NatCon 2025, the nation's largest conference for mental health and substance use treatment leaders, we hosted a Strong Minds, Bright Futures Social Hour that brought together partners, advocates, and new friends from across the country.

Between local brews and real talk, we connected over what unites us: a shared commitment to making sure kids and families get the support they need, when they need it. We laughed, we strategized, and we remembered what makes this work not just urgent but joyful.



5th Annual PA Latino Health Summit



At the Latino Health Summit, community leaders, advocates, and health professionals came together to address the unique mental health challenges faced by Latino youth. Their powerful stories and collective call for action underscore the need for culturally competent care and greater access to mental health services across Pennsylvania.

“We need mental health services that speaks to our community, our experiences, and our needs. It’s time for change.” David Heayn-Menendez

[Learn More](#)

2025 Health Equity Conference

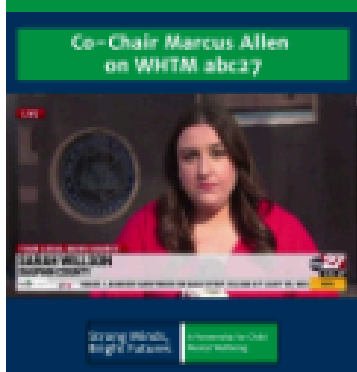


At the Health Equity Conference, advocates gathered to emphasize the importance of removing barriers to mental health care for all children. The session centered on expanding Medicaid and restoring funding to sustain vital school-based mental health services for students.

“Access to mental health care is a right, not a privilege. We can’t let funding cuts take away the support kids need to thrive.” - Kate Fox

[Learn More](#)

In the News



ABC27 / WHTM featured the Strong Minds, Bright Futures Partnership and our growing movement to improve Pennsylvania’s mental health system for children and youth.

As SMBF Co-Chair Marcus Allen shared: “When mental health goes untreated... it’s only going to get worse, which means it’s only going to get more expensive.

We’re so proud to see this work gaining visibility—and we’re just getting started.

[Read the Article](#)

Resources

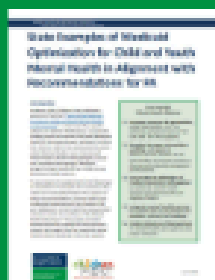
Strong Minds Bright Futures Webinar Highlight: Solutions to the Youth Mental Health Crisis 3/11/25



Expanding mental health services, supporting families, and driving policy change were just a few of the critical topics we covered at the Solutions to the Youth Mental Health Crisis webinar on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 12:00 PM.

[Click the video](#) to view the highlight reel and hear directly from parents, youth, and experts as they discuss urgent challenges and innovative solutions shaping the future of care.

REPORT: State Examples of Medicaid Optimization for Child and Youth Mental Health in Alignment with Recommendations for PA



This report from Strong Minds, Bright Futures and Children First highlights how other states are optimizing Medicaid to strengthen children's mental health services and what Pennsylvania can learn from them.

From expanding access to early care and culturally competent providers to integrating school- and family-based services, this report showcases proven strategies that align with the five reforms SMBF is advocating for. It's a powerful tool to show what's possible when Medicaid is used to its full potential. Read and share the report to help push for smart, sustainable reforms here in the Commonwealth.

[Learn More](#)

REPORT: Optimizing Medicaid to Improve Child and Youth Mental Health in PA



This report brief from Strong Minds, Bright Futures and Children First lays out a bold, actionable vision to strengthen Pennsylvania's children's mental health system by fully leveraging Medicaid.

With five concrete reforms, from expanding prevention services and provider types to integrating care in schools and pediatric offices, the report shows how the Commonwealth can create a sustainable, community-based system of care. Drawing on federal policy tools, existing state authority, and funding strategies, the brief offers a clear path forward to meet growing needs and support children before crisis hits. Read the full report to explore what's possible and how we get there.

[Learn More](#)

Quote of the Month

"Prevention is no longer a wall built against danger, but a mirror held up to who we are and who we hope to become. In a world where one mistake can cost a life, the new frontier of prevention is not about saying "no." It is about saying "I belong," "I matter" and "I choose." What once tried to shield youth from the world now invites them to shape it, with wisdom born not from fear but from connection, courage and truth." - [Gina Malagold, Ph.D.](#)

[Learn More](#)

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