

Child PBHS Utilization During Pandemic

Issue Brief | September 22, 2021



Despite a pandemic-driven increase in the need for mental health supports for children, providers serving children in the public behavioral health system have reported significant declines in the number of children receiving services.

This factsheet summarizes the total change in monthly census of children receiving program services pre-pandemic and presently. A sample of 13 provider organizations reported the data informing this factsheet.

A. OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

Total decline in monthly child OMHC census (Feb 2020 to Sept 2021): - 7%

- 7 in 10 providers report census declines. Average decline: - 19%
- 3 in 10 providers report census growth. Average growth: + 66%
- 78% have staff vacancies
- 50% have waitlists

B. PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR MINORS

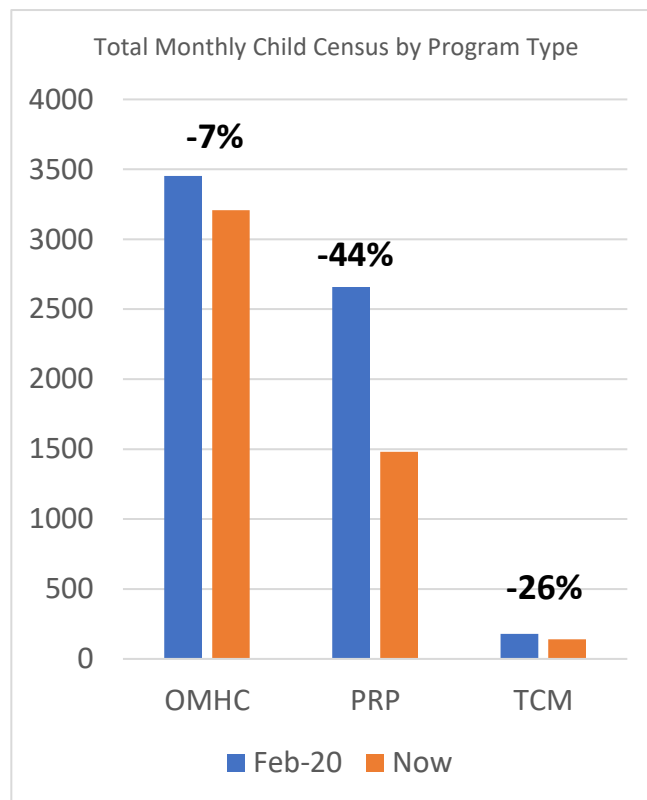
Total decline in monthly child PRP census (Feb 2020 to present): - 44%

- 92% of providers report census declines; 8% report flat census. Average decline: - 30%
- Note: Two providers cite their census declines as driven by inappropriate Optum denials of authorization requests.
- 83% have staff vacancies; programs without staff vacancies have reduced staff due to reduced service volume.

C. TARGET CASE MANAGEMENT

Total decline in monthly child OMHC census (Feb 2020 to Sept 2021): - 26%

- 2 of 2 providers report census declines. Average decline: - 19%
- 50% have staff vacancies
- zero waitlist



TOP FIVE CITED REASONS FOR CENSUS DECLINE

- Decline in referrals from traditional sources (schools, PCPs)
- Staff vacancies
- Zoom Fatigue/telehealth reluctance
- Unwilling to do In-person treatment
- Inappropriate denial of authorization request by Optum (PRP only)