

# The New Welfare: an examination of Medicaid and children's mental health\*

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**SUMMARY:** American children are being increasingly diagnosed with psychiatric disorders and in tandem child disability payments are increasing.

**KEY WORDS:** Children's mental health, ADHD, Medicaid, welfare, disability, Supplemental Security Income

Over the last twenty years, there has been a significant increase in the number of American children being diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. In tandem with the increase in psychiatric disorders, there is also a marked increase in the number of American children receiving disability payments related to a diagnosed mental health disorder. This paper examines recent trends related to child psychiatric diagnoses, federal policies, and child disability payments in America.

## Children's mental health

Children's mental health needs and mental health systems differ from adults (National Association of Mental Illness (McMorrow & Embry, 2010). Children may experience emotional and behavioral changes that are part of normal development, thus, complicating mental health diagnostic efforts. Diagnosing children's mental health is more difficult than assessing the mental health of adults. According to

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