

Lawmakers, Health Officials Discuss Youth Mental Health

by Andrew Hensel

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The Center Square – Health Officials and lawmakers are discussing plans to address the growing problem of mental health issues among children in Illinois.

Representatives from Rosecrance Health Network, Advocate Children's Hospital, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and others attended a joint hearing to combat mental health issues for kids.

Illinois has seen a growing problem of mental health among adolescents, with 9 percent of children 9 through 17 dealing with serious mental health issues, according to the Illinois Department of Health and Services.

President and CEO of Rosecrance Health Network, Dr. David Gomel, said fixing the state's Medicaid coverage is vital to getting children the care they need.

"We have proposed a cost-effective solution that will provide all Illinois kids with mental health treatment," Gomel said. "Majority of states over these treatments through Medicaid, the sooner we resolve this issue the sooner all Illinois youth will get the help they deserve."

State Sen. Laura Fine was animated when addressing the issues the state faces in getting children the care they need.

"You have heard from this committee that we are done here, we are demanding answers now, we will not be a state of orphans," Fine said.

Illinois has received more than \$100 million in federal aid to help address mental health.