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EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR CURRENT VIEWS ON UNMET NEED IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

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Objective: In over 60 years little has changed in children's mental health and the flag waving continues: It is time for action in the trenches. It is imperative to focus health policy on the need to provide basic mental health succor to children and their families. A failure to alter the situation related to children's mental health will no doubt have catastrophic consequences for our society. We review the level of progress made in reforming regional mental health services since 2002.

Methods: Using population-based representation of regional service utilization capacity permits comparison of regional, provincial and national rates of child and adolescent mental disorder.

Results: Regional services in the last 6 years have served at most approximately 1% of the 0-18 year old population annually. This rate represents an increase from about 0.6% in 2002.

Conclusions: Rationing the scant professional resources that exist to serve children's mental health will become increasingly difficult. For example, it is estimated that three percent of 0-18 year-olds are estimated to suffer a debilitating mental problem. Implication for policy are that our results point to service gaps in need of immediate policy development to meet basic needs of children. Several strategies are considered.