

Psychiatric Intake Response Center 2023 Annual Report



The PIRC provides these services thanks to generous support from The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, the Walker Area Community Foundation, the United Way of Central Alabama, and individual donors. The PIRC was established in partnership with The Anne B. LaRussa Foundation of Hope's support.



Pictured on front cover: Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) employees celebrate PIRC's 5th year of service to communities statewide. Left to right: PIRC Medical Director Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" C. Martinez, Jr.; PIRC Therapist Matt Foster; PIRC Therapist Shannon Messina; PIRC Director Cindy Jones; PIRC Therapist Susan Smith; PIRC Therapist Jalana Johnson; PIRC Therapist Mindy Cavender; and Psychiatric Consult Team Nurse Practitioner Christina Oanca.

A Letter from the PIRC Medical Director

Dear Community Partners, Clinicians and Friends:

I hope this letter finds you in the best of health and spirits.

On behalf of the entire Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) Team, I am writing to express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and encouragement over the past five years. In this period, we have had the honor and privilege to serve our community, specifically focusing on pediatric patients who require immediate mental health aid.

At Children's of Alabama, pediatric mental health is a priority, and this is especially important given the national state of emergency in children's mental health. Since our inception five years ago, the primary mission has been to provide timely, professional, and confidential guidance in helping callers navigate the mental health care system.

With your continuous support and belief in the care we offer, the PIRC Team has made a significant difference in the lives of hundreds of children. The success of our program is a testament to the dedication, challenging work, and compassion of our team, as well as the invaluable support of partners like you.

The PIRC has become a beacon of hope for families navigating the often complex and overwhelming world of pediatric mental health. We have been able to provide quick, effective, and compassionate responses to psychiatric emergencies, offer guidance to families in need, and connect communities statewide with the appropriate services and resources.

While celebrating our fifth anniversary, I reflected on our journey with immense gratitude and pride. We are excited about new opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The PIRC will continue to strive for excellence in our services, aiming to reach more children and adolescents in need of mental health care.

I urge all parents, caregivers, community leaders, and educators to be vigilant and initiative-taking in addressing our children's mental health. Let us normalize conversations around mental health and make it as important as physical health. Remember, it is okay for children to seek help. It is okay for them to talk about their feelings. It is okay for them to be upset. What is not okay is ignoring these signs and not providing them with the help they need.

Let us all ensure children's mental well-being and help them grow into healthy, resilient adults. Thank you for prioritizing the mental health of our children.

Yours sincerely,



Jesse Tobias C. Martinez Jr., M.D. | Clinical Assistant Professor

Medical Director, Psychiatric Intake Response Center and Consultation Liaison Psychiatry, Children's of Alabama

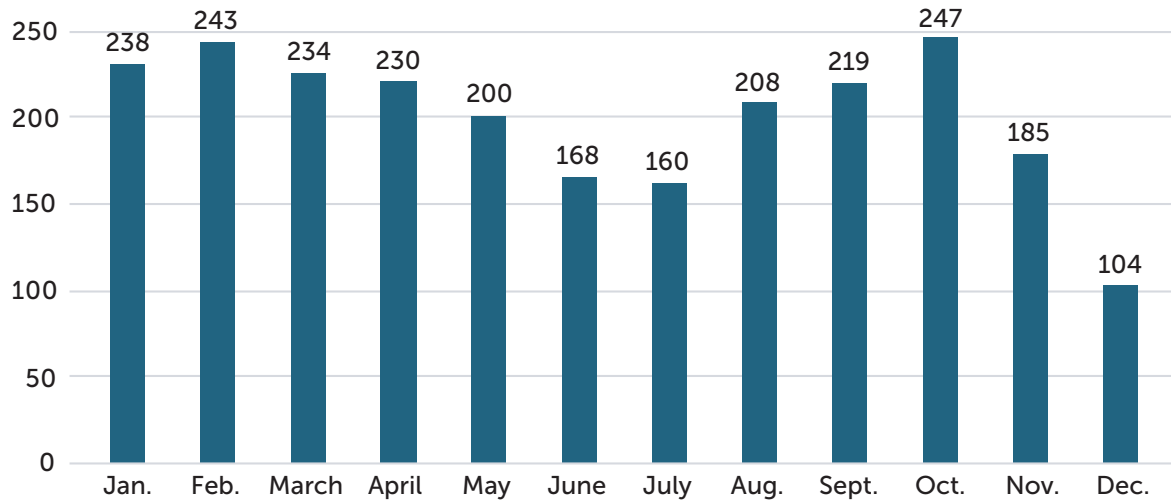
Psychiatrist, Alabama Pediatric Psychiatry, LLC

Clinical Assistance Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurobiology | Heersink School of Medicine, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry | The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

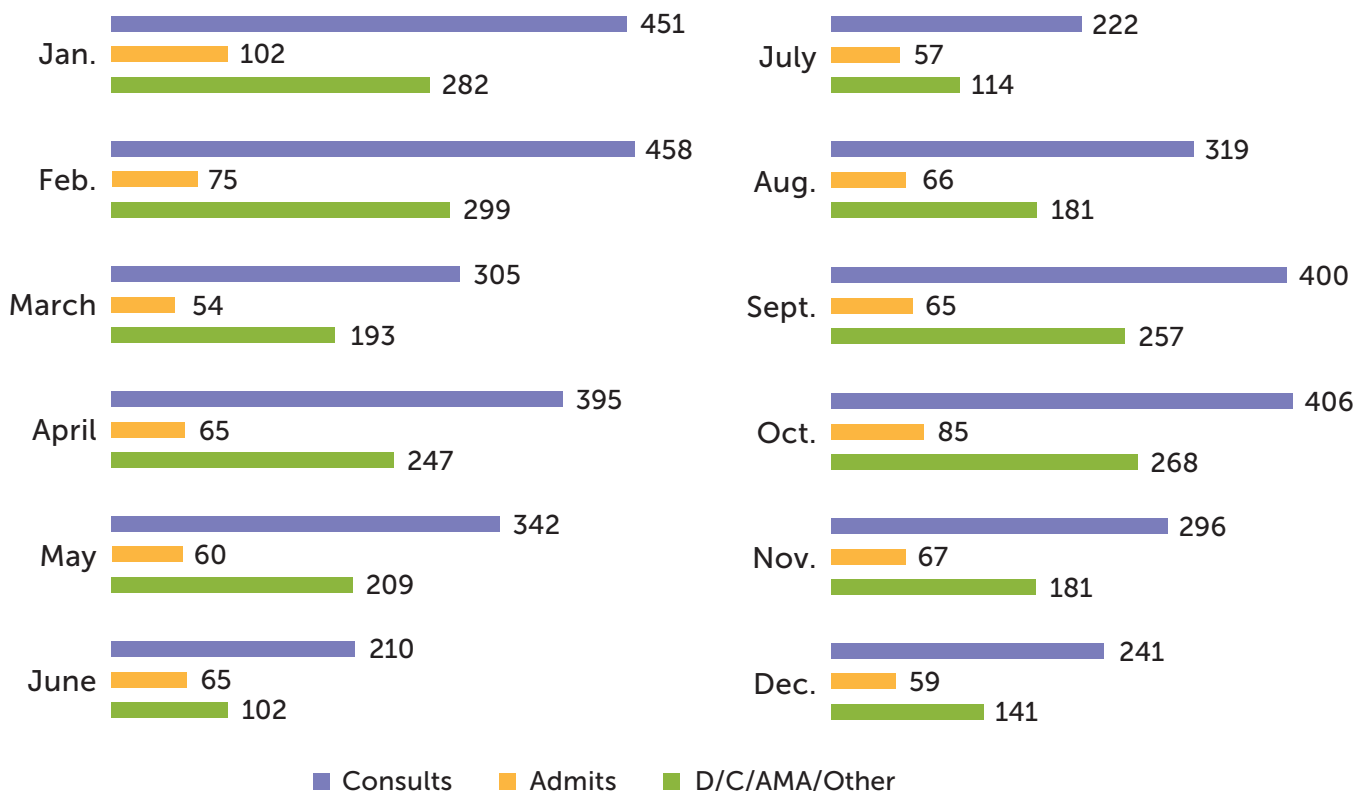


PIRC Statistics

Total PIRC Calls



Total Emergency Department Psychiatric Consults



PIRC Team



Inpatient Behavioral Health Services Milieu and Quality Incentives Manager Amy Brown, left; Children's Harbor Family Center Director and former PRN PIRC Therapist Cristal Cummings, center; and Behavioral Health Services Special Projects Manager Mary Huff, right; joined hospital employees and community partners in PIRC's 5th year of service celebration.



PIRC Therapist Shannon Messina, center; Psychiatric Consult Team Physician's Assistant Allison Burt, left; and PIRC Director Cindy Jones, right; recognize Messina as a Children's Allied Health Award nominee for Behavioral Health Counseling.

The PIRC reached a milestone in 2023, celebrating five years of service at Children's of Alabama. It may seem like a brief period, but the number of PIRC calls and Emergency Department (ED) consults statewide in five years totaled more than 35,800. In that same period, outreach to mental and health professionals, school representatives, and community members totaled more than 37,100 people. The PIRC Team built a database from 270 mental health providers in 2018 to more than 1,600 statewide. The PIRC and Psychiatric Consult Teams provided important crisis services in the Emergency Department, education to adults seeking mental health resources, and options when someone was seeking the right care, at the right time, and in the right place.

Addressing the continued demand of behavioral health emergency services in the ED, the hospital opened a \$4.5 million psychiatric-safe, 16-bed area in the ED. The Nature Hall is open 24/7 and began accepting patients in March. The expansion addressed specific needs of this patient population particularly a 36% increase in ED patient consults over the last five years. Other benefits were to increase safety with a behavioral health designed area that expanded to 16 beds from four. Nature Hall helped increase patient and family satisfaction by staffing only behavioral health trained employees. Lastly, the hospital wanted to improve patient throughput with less wait times. Since opening, the average length of stay of patients who discharged from the ED decreased from 9.5 hours to 4.6.

This year, almost 2,500 people called the PIRC seeking mental health resources statewide. More than 4,000 patients received services from Children's Emergency Department's medical staff and Psychiatric Consult Team, including Psychiatrists, UAB Fellows, Physicians' Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and PIRC Therapists. Altogether, about 6,500 callers and patients received PIRC and Psychiatric Consult Team services.

Our teams continues to offer excellent care to patients and families. PIRC Therapist Shannon Messina was recognized as a Children's Allied Health Award nominee for Behavioral Health Counseling. Messina has been at Children's since PIRC's opening in 2018.

PIRC Team

PIRC Administrators and Directors

Thomas “Tom” G. Shufflebarger, MBA, FACHE,
President and Chief Executive Officer

Andrew “Andy” Loehr, DNP, RN, CNML, CPNP,
Chief Operations Officer

Brandy Reeve, MSN, RN, CPN, CENP,
Senior Executive Leader, Behavioral
Health Services

Jesse Tobias “Toby” C. Martinez Jr., MD,
Medical Director, Psychiatric Intake
Response Center (PIRC) and Consultation-
Liaison Psychiatry

Cynthia “Cindy” M. Jones, LPC-S, NCC,
Director, Psychiatric Intake Response Center
(PIRC) and Partial Hospitalization Program



PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consultation-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias “Toby” C. Martinez, Jr., far left; PIRC Therapist Faith Lowe, center; Psychiatric Consult Team Nurse Practitioner Shaquenta Powe, back right; and PIRC Therapist Amory Strange, far right; work the evening shift in the new psychiatric-safe Nature Hall located in the Emergency Department.

PIRC Mental Health Therapists

Ahmad Brewer, LICSW, PIP

Mindy Cavender, LICSW

Ashley Davis, LPC

Jordan Elliott, ALC

Alex Faust, LPC

Ashley Ferguson, LPC

Matt Foster, LPC

Courtney Johnson, ALC

Jalana Johnson, LPC

Carmen Lambert, LICSW

Naren Leopard, LICSW, PIP

Ashley Loftis, LPC

Faith Lowe, LMSW

Shannon Messina, LICSW

Susan Smith, LICSW, PIP

Amory Strange, LICSW

Justin Weatherly, LMSW

“It’s (PIRC’s) super helpful. It’s hard to navigate the system. You guys provide a great service.”

Dr. Khalilah Brown, Pediatrician and Vice President of Medical Affairs and Patient Advocacy, Southern Research, and former Child Health Medical and Laboratory Director, Jefferson County Department of Health

PIRC Team



The Nature Hall in the Emergency Department, a \$4.5 million psychiatric-safe, 16-bed area, opened in March. The expansion addressed needs of the behavioral health patients and caregivers such as, a safer environment and staffing of all behavioral health trained employees.

PIRC Impact

- 2,444 calls, averaging 204 a month.
- 4,045 Emergency Department psychiatric consults, averaging 337 a month.
- 6,489 callers and patients received PIRC and Psychiatric Consult Team services.
- 1,855 PIRC database providers statewide and surrounding states, a 9% increase from 2022. The team focused on updating and adding more autism providers, including Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Applied Behavior Analysts (ABAs) practitioners; Psychologists; Marriage & Family Therapists; and Family Resource Centers in Alabama.
- 10,984 mental health/health professionals, school representatives, and community members were a part of community outreach.

"You have been such, such help. Thank you so much! Other people were telling me it wasn't possible (for a mental health professional) to come into the home and help."

Anonymous Mother, 3-year-old diagnosed with autism, given information on in-home services during a PIRC call.

PIRC Advisory Committee members are important to the mission and goals of the PIRC. They generously provide their time and expertise to address ongoing children's behavioral and mental health concerns statewide.



Advisory Committee members Stacy White, left, Community Advocate and former Behavioral Health Senior Executive Leader; and Dr. Artie Nelson, right, Child, Adolescent, and Family Psychiatrist; celebrate PIRC's 5 years of service. Both members have been important in the growth and development of PIRC from its beginnings until today.

Brian Blakes, Fire Chaplain, City of Birmingham Fire and Rescue Service

Kyle Echols, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Private Practice

Margo Harwell, Director of Alternative Mental Health Services and Pediatric Tele-Mental Health (PATHS) Network Project Manager, Children's of Alabama

Gus Heard-Hughes, Vice President of Programs, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB)

Cindy Jones, Director of Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) and Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP), Children's of Alabama

Morissa Ladinsky, Associate Professor of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, UAB and Children's of Alabama

Benny LaRussa, Jr., Chief Executive Officer, Sterling Capital Management

Leigh Long, Social Worker, Mental Health Community Advocate

Jesse Tobias "Toby" C. Martinez, Jr., Medical Director of Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) and Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry, Children's of Alabama, UAB, and Alabama Pediatric Psychiatry, LLC

Lisa Maloney, Director of Emergency Department, Children's of Alabama

Michelle McGlaughlin, Director of Grants and Contracts, Children's Aid Society of Alabama

Kathy Marino, Clinical Intake Coordinator, Newcastle Education Consultants

Kathy Monroe, Professor and Divisional Director of Emergency Department, Children's of Alabama

Artie Nelson, Child, Adolescent, and Family Psychiatrist, Private Practice

Kadie Peters, Vice President of Community Impact Strategy and Resource Development, United Way of Central Alabama (UWCA)

Brandy Reeve, Senior Executive Leader, Behavioral Health Services, Children's of Alabama

Robin Sparks, Mental Health Initiative Director, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB)

Garland Stansell, Chief Communications Officer, Children's of Alabama

John Stone, Director of Advancement, Children's Aid Society of Alabama

Stacy White, Mental Health Community Advocate

Erica Wilson, Licensed Professional Counselor, The Olive Branch Counseling Center, LLC

PIRC Community Outreach



2,549

Health & Mental Health
Care Professionals



5,586

School
Representatives



2,849

Community
Members

As invited speakers, exhibitors, educators, and sponsors of 50 events statewide, totaling 164 hours, PIRC information was shared with 10,984 attendees:

Media

Children's of Alabama Strategic Marketing and Communications Department plays an important role in delivering PIRC information and education to the public. Chief Communications Officer and PIRC Advisory Committee member Garland Stansell directs his teams to promote the PIRC through multiple outlets. Listed below are a few who featured PIRC services in 2023:

- Al.com digital advertising PIRC services in March, April, May, August, and October.
- Children's social media posts: PIRC 5-year anniversary, *This is Alabama* video featuring the PIRC, and 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline and World Suicide Day featuring PIRC and Behavioral Health Services.
- The Alabama Baptist
- Birmingham Medical News
- Shelby County Reporter
- The Madison Record
- Good Grit, a Southern culture magazine
- WVUA 23 TV Tuscaloosa
- WTVY 95.5 Music & Miracles Dothan Radiothon
- Minute with Children's (Aired on all Gray TV stations statewide)
- Birmingham Lifestyle Magazine
- Alabama Public Radio
- Discover Gardendale
- Bham Family

"You (PIRC) are a great, great help to me. I appreciate all you do."

Dr. Amy CaJacob, Assistant Professor, Clinical Immunology,
Pediatric Allergy, UAB

PIRC Community Outreach



Children's of Alabama Mental Health Awareness Conference planning committee chose state leaders to speak about the social determinants of health from a mental health perspective.



At Children's Practical Day of Pediatrics conference, UAB Fellow Dr. Ana Eusebio, left; and PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez, right; presented to 100 pediatricians on "Medication Management for Depression and Anxiety (Beyond SSRIs)."

Collaborations, partnerships, and outreach focused on mental and health care providers, schools, and communities statewide is one of PIRC's missions. The connection with these groups allowed PIRC to address mental and behavioral health needs of children and adolescents. Here are some highlights of the year:

Mental Health/Healthcare Providers

Children's of Alabama Practical Day of Pediatrics Conference: PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez and UAB Fellow Dr. Ana Eusebio presented about "Medication Management for Depression and Anxiety (Beyond SSRIs)." PIRC Director Cindy Jones exhibited at the event which included 100 pediatricians in attendance. The conference is held annually at Children's of Alabama.

Children's of Alabama Mental Health Awareness Conference: The one-day conference on the "Social Determinants of Health from a Mental Health Perspective" featured state leaders who educated more than 450 mental health professionals on topics such as, rising psychosocial needs, suicide prevention, adoption, and establishing emotional wellness. PIRC exhibited at the event and PIRC Director Cindy Jones was on the conference planning committee. The conference is held annually at Children's of Alabama.

Mental Health Equity and Liberation Summit: This summit hosted by the Black Women's Mental Health Institute was the sixth year PIRC sponsored the event. The focus was on political determinants of mental health, culturally

PIRC Community Outreach



PIRC information was provided to a cohort of 21 statewide mental health therapists seen here who attended a free Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) training sponsored by Pediatric Access to Tele-Mental Health Services (PATHS) at Children's of Alabama. Pictured in the front, left to right, are therapists from Cullman, Winston, and Marion counties and behind are two PCIT trainers.



PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez talks to a participant at the Mental Health Equity and Liberation Summit.

Mental Health/Healthcare Providers (cont.)

competent child psychiatry, building equitable mental health services, social justice, and mental health advocacy. PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez presented with Psychiatrist and PIRC Advisory Committee Member Dr. Artie Nelson on culturally competent child psychiatry. PIRC exhibited at the event with about 150 mental health professionals attending in-person and virtually.

Children's of Alabama Pediatric Access to Tele-Health (PATHS) ECHO Presentation: PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez and PIRC Director Cindy Jones presented to about 70 rural pediatricians and family practice physicians statewide on, "Pediatric Emergency Psychiatric Care: Suicide Assessment." The presentation focused on suicide risk factors and warning signs, evidence-based risk assessment tools, safety planning, and community resources for patients. Children's PATHS program provides ECHO training/education and consultation services to rural physicians and tele-mental health care to their patients.

Children's of Alabama Pediatric Access to Tele-Health (PATHS) Trainings: PIRC information was provided to a cohort of 21 statewide mental health therapists, 59 early childhood workers, and 160 school counselors and DHR workers. The trainings were free to all participants and provided much-needed education on mental health concerns of children and adolescents and how to support them and their families. Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) training, a highly specialized, evidence-based treatment program, was provided to the mental health therapists. This training is designed for parents and their young children who are experiencing behavioral and/or emotional difficulties.

PIRC Community Outreach



Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana Boys & Girls Club leaders attended a conference focusing on how the clubs' may better support youth development. PIRC Director Cindy Jones spoke on the ongoing child and adolescent mental health crisis and ways to address kids' needs.



PIRC Director Cindy Jones, center, is at the Alabama State Department of Education's MEGA Conference with Associate Professor and Program Director Dr. Aida Miles, left, UAB Leadership Education in Pediatric Nutrition Program/Adolescent Health Clinic; and Physician Marketing Manager Leslie Edmondson, right, Children's of Alabama's Strategic Communications and Marketing department.

Schools

Boys & Girls Clubs of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana Conference: PIRC Director Cindy Jones spoke to about 40 Boys & Girls Clubs' leaders on how to provide youth development in an ongoing child and adolescent mental health crisis. She recommended the clubs focus on minority groups' needs, build relationships with cultural humility, educate parent/caregivers on ways to build trust and improve communication with their child, partner with school mental health professionals, encourage kids to pursue mental health as a career, and decrease mental health stigma.

Alabama State Department of Education's MEGA Conference: PIRC Director Cindy Jones exhibited at the annual MEGA Conference held in Mobile. The conference was a week-long event which provided more than 4,000 statewide school personnel and community leaders with opportunities to participate in in-depth training sessions and learn from leading experts across the education spectrum. Jones talked about PIRC services to representatives from 30 counties in Alabama. Children's of Alabama Adolescent Health Clinic exhibited at the conference as well.

Resources at the Railroad Mental Health and Wellness Fair: PIRC Therapist Alex Faust provided PIRC information to individuals attending the resource fair at Railroad Park in Birmingham. The event was a collaboration of School Mental Health Coordinators, representing Birmingham City, Bessemer, Fairfield, Homewood, Hoover, i3 Academy, Jefferson County, Leeds, Midfield, Mountain Brook, Pelham, Trussville, Tarrant, and Vestavia Hills schools. More than 75 people attended.

Jefferson County School District: The district expanded its mental health services, including launching the CARES (Comprehensive Assistance Resources Education and Support) Team. Eight members of the team presented about

PIRC Community Outreach



Children's Behavioral Health Department employees, the largest team for the fourth year in a row, participated in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Birmingham Walk.



PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez answered questions from Restorative Counseling Services owner and Licensed Professional Counselor Monique Johnson about mental health care for children and teens at the first annual Wrapping Up the Stigma of Mental Health event.

Schools (cont.)

CARES and learned about PIRC services from PIRC Therapists Shannon Messina and Susan Smith, and PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez. The CARES Team serves 58 schools with 39,000 students by meeting with them individually and in small groups to address the students' mental health concerns.

Birmingham Coalition for Student Mental Health (BCSMH): The Bold Goals Coalition of the United Way of Central Alabama has partnered with the Birmingham Coalition for Student Mental Health (BCSMH) to develop and actively pursue equitable, community-driven policy proposals to address student mental health disparities. PIRC Director Cindy Jones is a member of the coalition, which so far reaches 10 school systems, public and private, within Jefferson County.

All Nations Church Back-to-School Bash: PIRC Therapist Mindy Cavender attended the community event at Fairfield High School. She provided information on PIRC services to more than 200 people. The church has ongoing community events such as this, to educate local schools in Fairfield and Birmingham and colleges in Talladega County on resources for those struggling with substance use, mental health concerns, and suicide.

"I called hoping for support and was amazed! Great service!"

Stephanie L. Pope, Mental Health Service Coordinator, Saraland City Schools, Mobile County

PIRC Community Outreach



Two kids take a break at the Addiction Prevention Coalition (APC) End Addiction BHAM Walk where PIRC exhibited on its services. APC is a non-profit community resource that aims to eliminate addiction in Central Alabama.



PIRC Therapist Matt Foster speaks about PIRC services to more than 300 participants at the Alabama Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of the Darkness Walk.

Community Events

Alabama Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of the Darkness Walk: PIRC Therapist Matt Foster spoke at the walk and provided information on PIRC services. The annual event had more than 300 people to walk in honor of victims of suicide and to raise awareness about suicide prevention. AFSP focuses on eliminating the loss of life from suicide by delivering innovative prevention programs, educating the public about risk factors, and warning signs, raising funds for suicide research and programs, and reaching out to those individuals who have lost someone to suicide.

Addiction Prevention Coalition (APC) End Addiction BHAM Walk: The walk was organized by APC, which is a non-profit community resource that aims to eliminate addiction in Central Alabama. PIRC Director Cindy Jones participated in the walk and provided PIRC information to attendees numbering more than 2,000 from Jefferson, Shelby, Lee, and Madison counties.

Celebrate the Family Expo: PIRC Therapist Amory Strange exhibited on PIRC services to more than 200 people at the event. *Birmingham Christian Family* magazine organized the expo, which hoped to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of families living in Jefferson and Shelby counties by having community leaders and vendors on site.

Mental Health Roundtable: Behavioral Health Services Senior Executive Leader Brandy Reeve and PIRC Director Cindy Jones presented an update on Children's Behavioral Health Services at one of the quarterly meetings Reeve and Jones attended throughout the year. The roundtable is a collaborative of more than 100 healthcare systems, mental health providers, faith-based entities, and stakeholders in Jefferson and Shelby counties.

PIRC Community Outreach



PIRC Therapist Alex Faust, left, spoke to participants about PIRC services at the first annual City of Hoover Community Mental Health Day.



PIRC Therapist Amory Strange provided PIRC information to more than 200 people who attended the annual Celebrate the Family Expo sponsored by Birmingham Christian Family magazine. The event aims to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of families living in Jefferson and Shelby counties.

Community Events (cont.)

City of Hoover Community Mental Health Day: PIRC Therapist Alex Faust spoke to participants about PIRC services at the first annual mental health event. Attended by about 75 members of the community, Hoover's Community Mental Health Day provided an opportunity to meet mental health representatives, listen to speakers, and ask questions of professionals regarding mental health.

Wrapping Up the Stigma of Mental Health: Restorative Counseling Services and WrapItUp Customs hosted their first annual mental health awareness event in Birmingham. PIRC Medical Director and Psychiatry Consult-Liaison Dr. Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez participated in a Q&A session with Restorative Counseling Services owner and Licensed Professional Counselor Monique Johnson. The event had about 100 attendees who were provided mental health information, including PIRC services.

Lead Early Birmingham: The City of Birmingham's Department of Youth Services partnered with Casey Family Programs to host a first of its kind cohort, Lead Early Birmingham. PIRC Director Cindy Jones was the keynote speaker on Maternal & Child Health, focusing on mental health. The participants were a diverse group of interested local leaders to serve as champions for families and children ages birth through five in Birmingham.

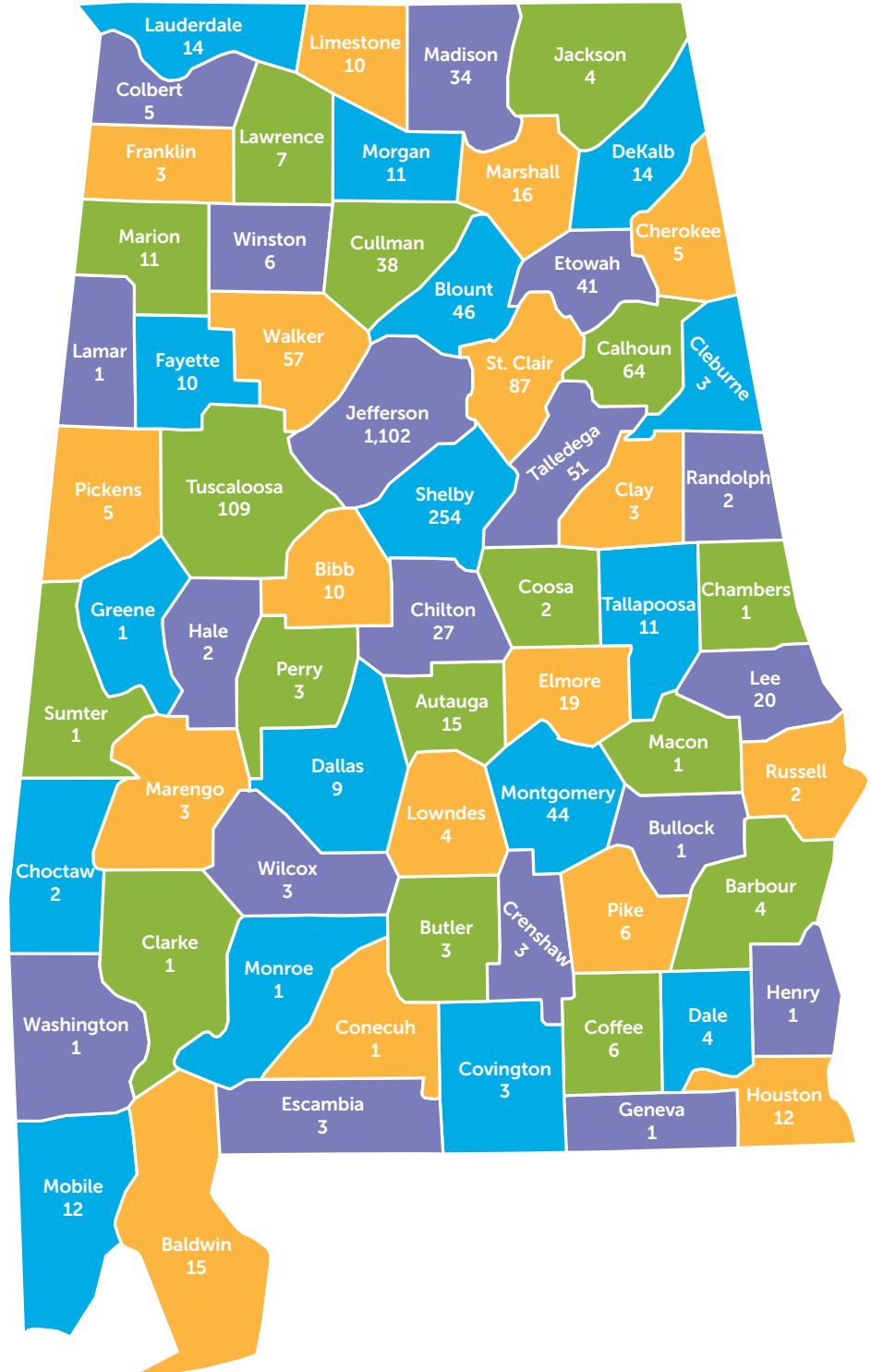
Birmingham Immigrant Resource Network (BIRN): This network is part of Inspiritus, refugee and immigrant services in Alabama. Many services offered statewide to refugees and immigrants are mental health related. PIRC Director Cindy Jones spoke to network leaders about behavioral health services at Children's of Alabama.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Birmingham Walk: Children's Behavioral Health Services employees, the largest team for the fourth year in a row, participated in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Birmingham Walk. The Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) and the Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) services were featured exhibitors.

PIRC Callers by County*

TOTAL:
2,444

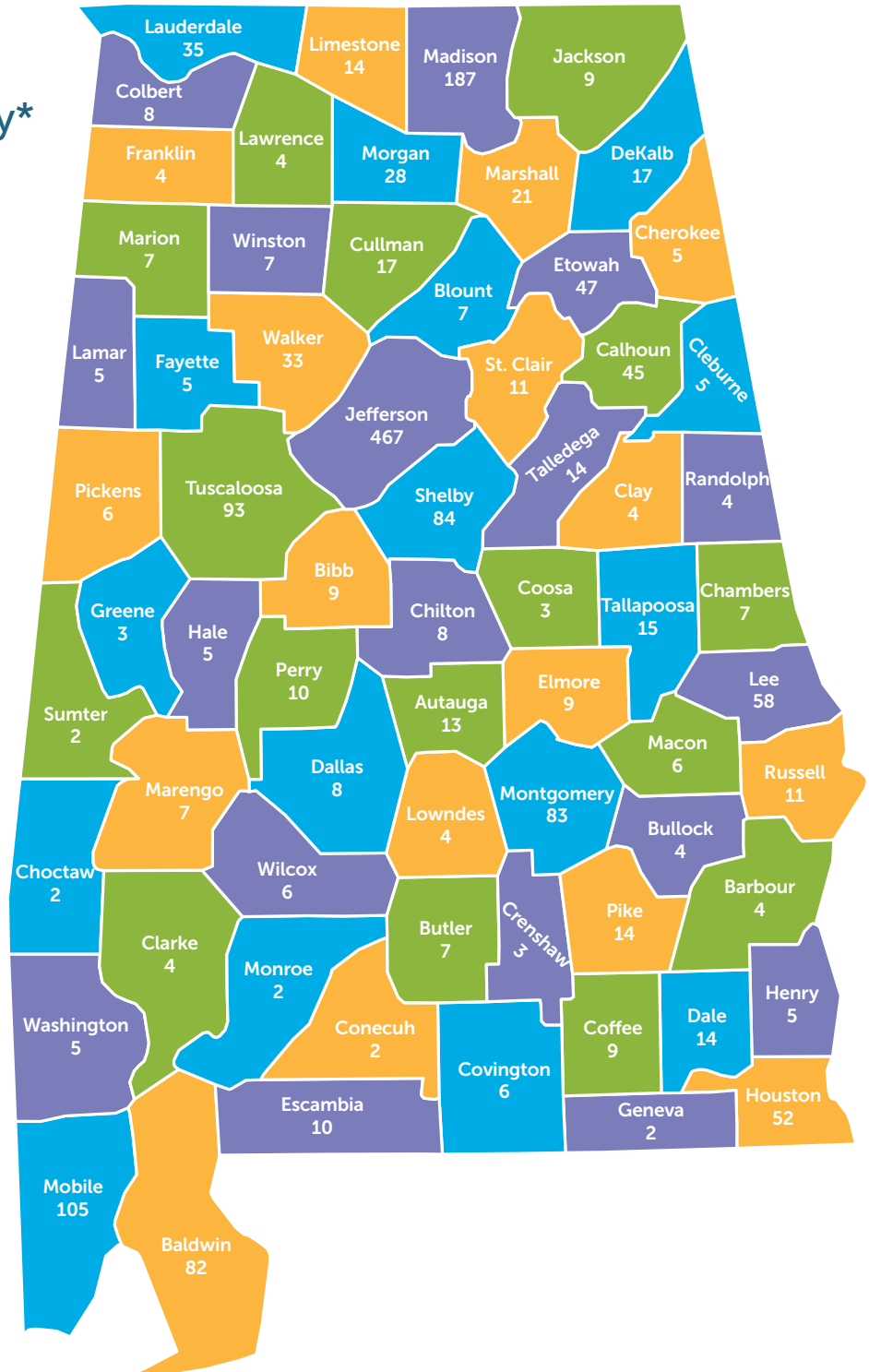
*174 callers were not identified by county.
8 were from out of state.



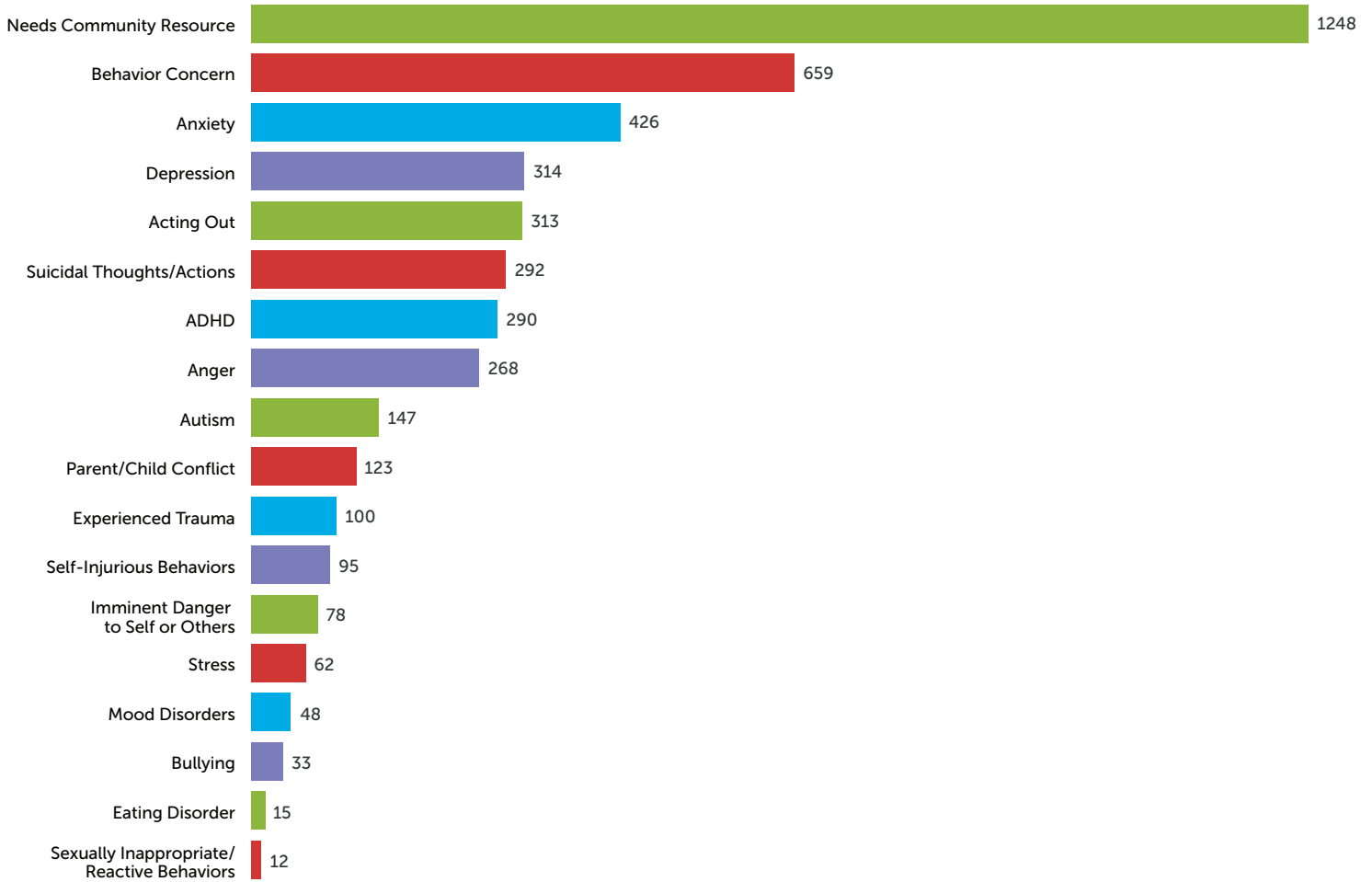
PIRC-Identified Mental Health Providers by County*

TOTAL:
1,855

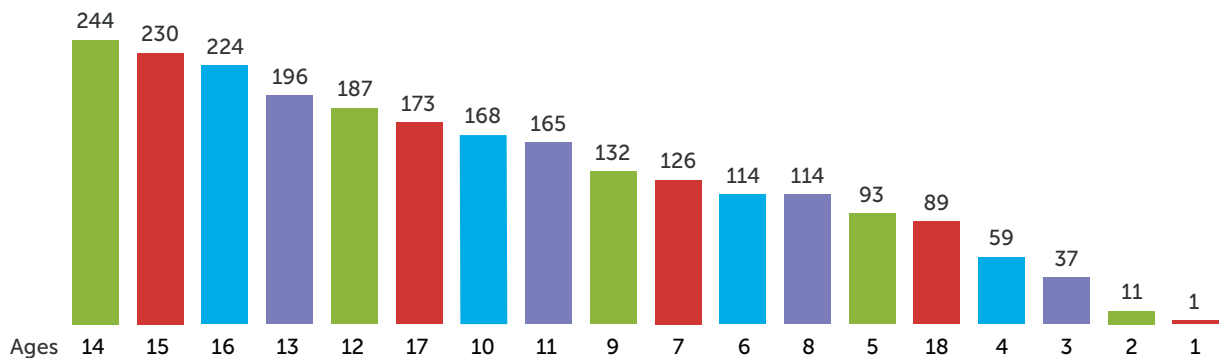
*Totals show the number of mental health care providers identified in the PIRC database. Though providers may have multiple clinicians in a practice, the database recognizes these as one listing. In addition, there were 62 out-of-state providers.



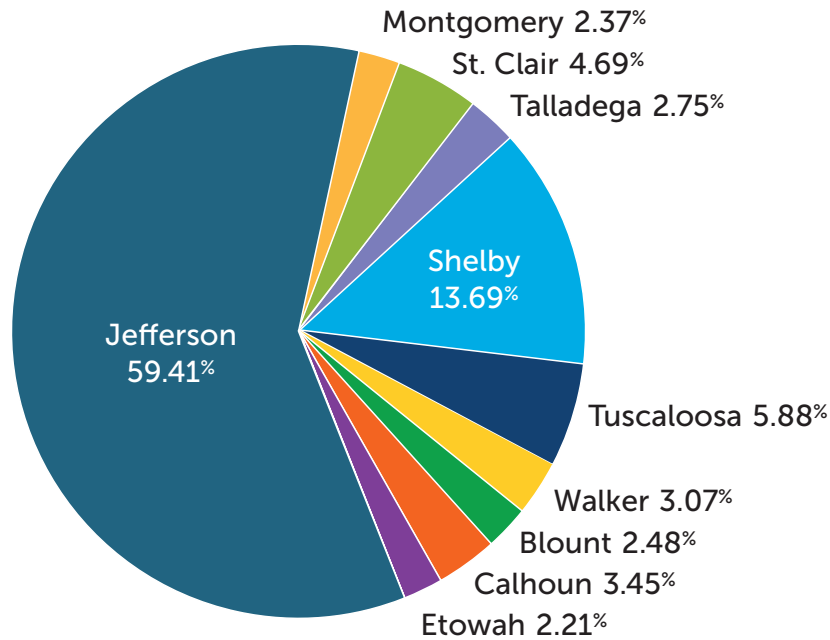
Caller's Primary Concern



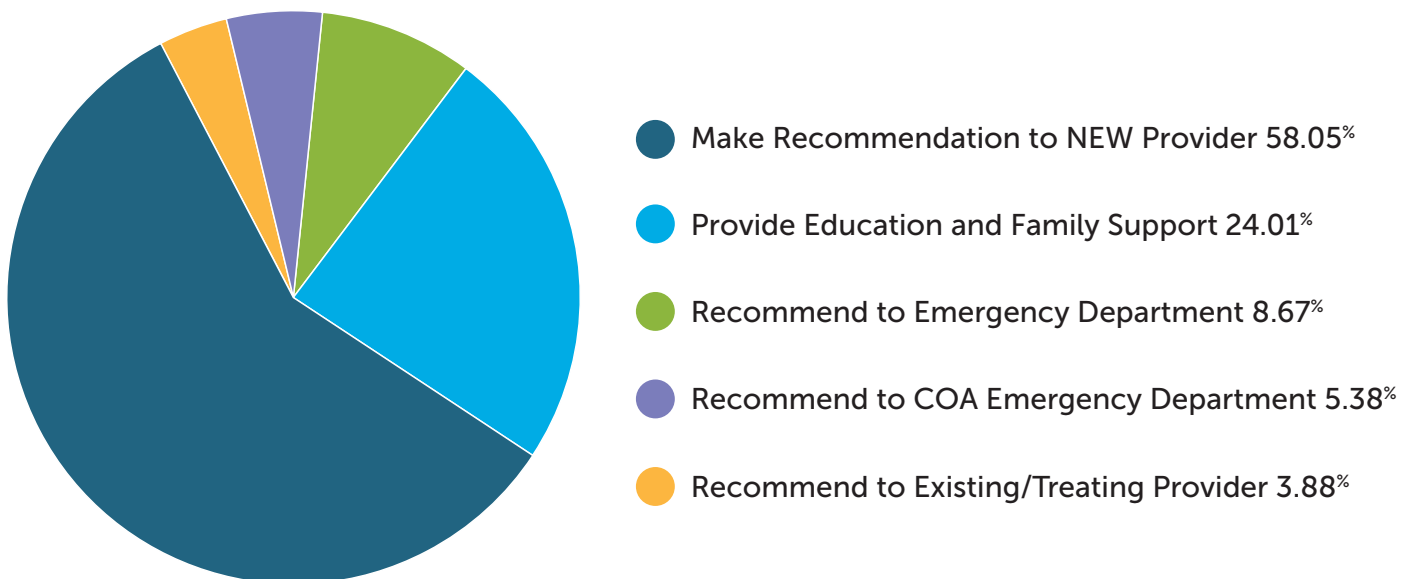
Number of Caller's Concerns by Ages



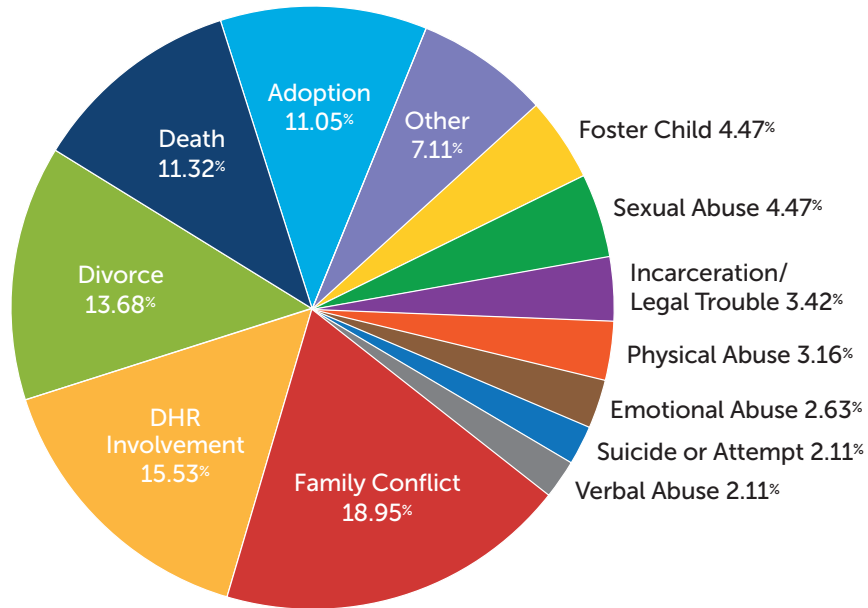
Top 10 Counties by Caller



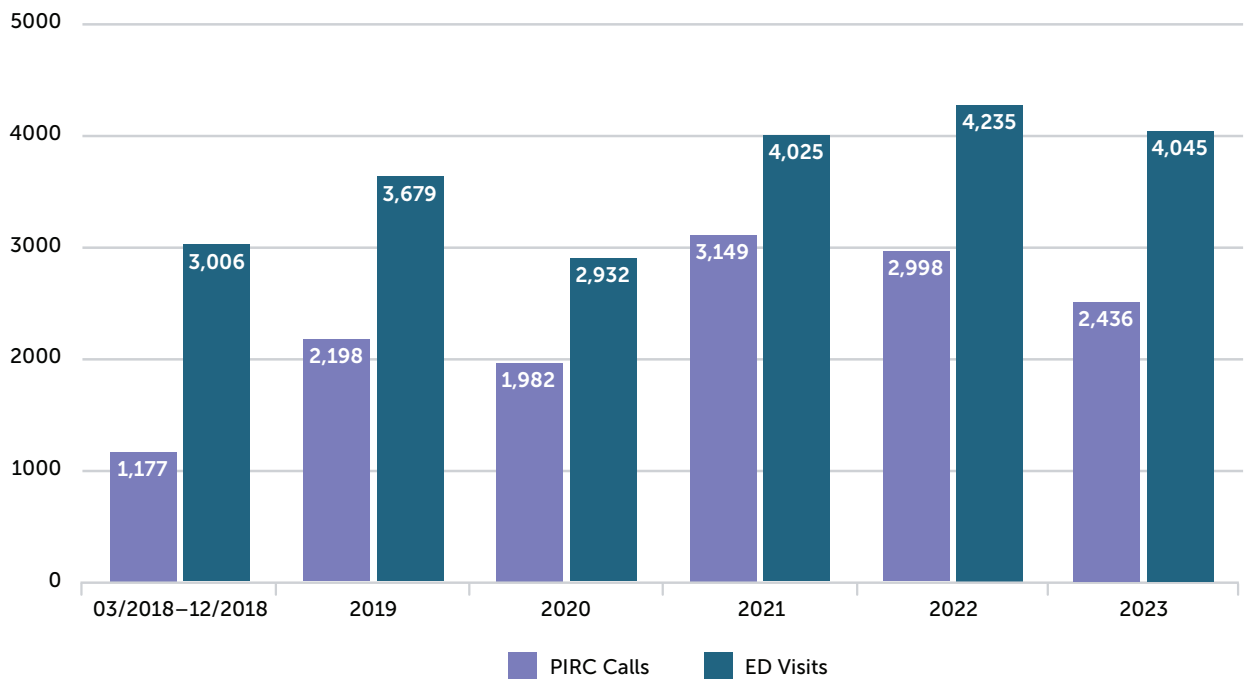
Caller's Disposition Profile



Caller's Psychosocial Indicators



PIRC Growth Since 2018



PIRC Future Plans



Behavioral and mental health continues to be a priority at Children's of Alabama. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 3.6% of 10-14 year olds experience and anxiety disorder.



Children's of Alabama was lit green in May to recognize Mental Health Awareness month. Behavioral Health Services and Strategic Communications and Marketing employees created public videos, podcasts, and Instagram fact or fiction questions about children's mental health.

Reflecting on the past five years, the PIRC has been in the right place, at the right time, and with the right services to address increasing and unprecedented behavioral and mental health concerns statewide. It began with six employees to 14 five years later. PIRC Therapists fielded 13,940 calls and conducted 21,922 ED consults in that same time, totaling 35,862 interventions. The PIRC database grew from 270 in 2018 to more than 1,600 in 2023. The PIRC is successful because of the outstanding PIRC and Psychiatric Consult Team members who meet patients and families where they are with expert clinical knowledge, empathy, support, and education. Without them, the PIRC could not have had such an impact and outreach statewide.

Behavioral Health Services is positioned to address the many ongoing challenges faced by children, adolescents, and their caregivers during a persistent youth mental health crisis. The PIRC is proud to be a part of the hospital's mission to provide excellence in everything we do. The hospital's mantra is: We Are Here. As Chief Executive Officer Tom Shufflebarger explains, "It's our way of reminding the public that no matter what's going on in the world, we won't stop," and Children's will be there when needed.

5-Year Totals



13,940
Calls



21,922
ED Consults



35,862
Interventions

PIRC Future Plans



Partnering with PATHS Tele-Mental Health program will allow PIRC to support rural ED physicians and school partners in 2024. Pictured left to right is PIRC Director Cindy Jones; former PATHS Director Susan Griffin; and incoming PATHS Director Margo Harwell.



PIRC Medical Director Dr. Jesse Tobias C. Martinez Jr. encourages everyone to make children's mental health as important as physical health.

2024 Goals

- Update and add behavioral and mental health providers to the PIRC database. Focus on Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, substance use providers, and eating disorder treatment centers.
- Target outreach and education to pediatricians, family physicians, mental health providers, and school personnel through conference exhibition and participation.
- Continue partnering with PATHS Tele-Mental Health program to support rural pediatricians and their patients and caregivers by identifying local mental health resources.
- Establish PIRC services as consultants to PATHS rural ED physicians and school partners.
- Identify new partnerships with community stakeholders.

"My son has a friend. His mother called me the other day and said he is having panic attacks due to some school issues. I told her to call the PIRC. She told me she called and got a call back. Some resources were being emailed to her, but he was in a full-blown panic, and she was taking him to the ED.

I never called the PIRC to let them know my friend was coming. I just knew you guys would take good care of him. Sure enough, yesterday afternoon she texts me telling me that you guys were wonderful and that y'all got him taken care of and she was calling the resources to get him follow up! She didn't know the names of who saw him but thank you guys for taking good care of Aiden's sweet friend!"

Naren Leopard, Inpatient Primary Therapist and PRN PIRC Therapist, Behavioral Health Services, Children's of Alabama



Children's
of Alabama®



Psychiatric Intake Response Center
Children's of Alabama Emergency Department
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ChildrensAL.org/PIRC