



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Arizona Pediatric
Psychiatry Access Line

MAY 2024 -
MARCH 2025

IMPACT REPORT



This photo is a stock image intended for illustrative purposes only. These individuals are models.

APAL Partners

ARIZONA
HEALTH CARE COST
CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

 **DMG**
DISTRICT MEDICAL GROUP

Arizona Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ARIZONA

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



What is the Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line (APAL)?

The Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) is dedicated to enhancing behavioral health care for children and adolescents by supporting frontline providers across the state. We are driven by a deep understanding of the profound impact of untreated mental illness on the healthy development of children and adolescents, their families, and also for healthcare providers caring for them in limited-resource communities. Staffed by experienced child and adolescent psychiatrists and coordinators, APAL offers free, timely, and high-quality consultation, education, and resources to help callers confidently manage complex behavioral health challenges. By strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers across the state, we strive to improve access to care, promote early intervention, and ensure that no child or family faces behavioral health struggles alone.

How Does APAL Work?

By bridging the gap between primary care and specialized behavioral health services, APAL is mitigating the profound impact of untreated behavioral health issues on Arizona's youth to help foster self-esteem, resilience, and well-being in the face of significant societal challenges.



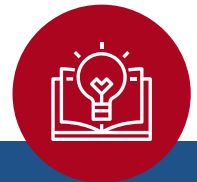
Phone Consultation

With a dedicated phone line, APAL provides timely access to child and adolescent psychiatrists and licensed behavioral health professionals to provide free case consultations on any pediatric behavioral health issue.



Resource Network

APAL provides clinical tools for providers to provide evidence-based care in their communities, such as measurement-based screening tools and clinical practice guidelines. The APAL team also connects families and providers with county, state, and national resources for child and adolescent patients.



Education

In collaboration with the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, APAL develops and disseminates comprehensive education, resources, and materials on relevant behavioral health topics to aid and empower healthcare providers caring for children and families with complex needs.

Why APAL?

Our children are struggling—and too often, they’re doing so in silence. Pediatric behavioral health disorders are rising rapidly, yet access to timely, specialized care remains out of reach for many.

Left untreated, pediatric behavioral illness fuels cycles of academic failure, addiction, incarceration and lasting difficulty for families.

Early intervention works - and in Arizona, its critical to turning the tide for at-risk youth.

#49

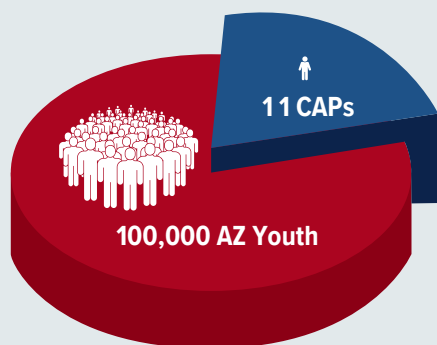
Arizona ranks 49th for Youth Mental Health.¹

#2

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15-24.²

91%

91% of communities do not have enough behavioral health providers according to federal guidelines.²



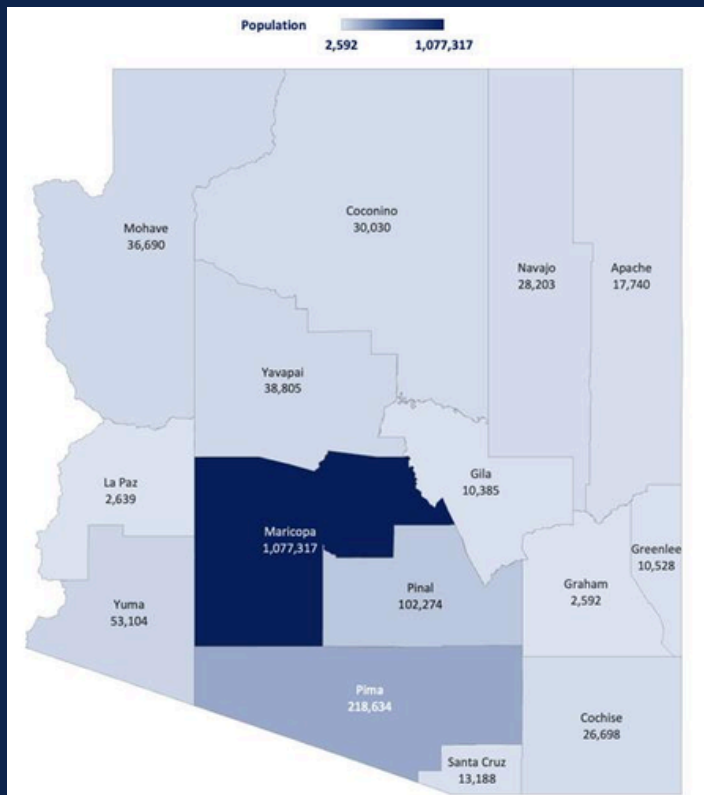
Arizona is a Behavioral Health Desert

There is a severe shortage of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (CAP) with only **11 CAPs per 100,000 children**.³

53% of counties in Arizona have no CAPs.

This stark gap in services leaves many children, particularly those in rural and communities on tribal lands, without timely or adequate care.

Pediatric Population in Arizona⁶



Over half of Arizona’s adolescents (55%) who needed behavioral health care reported difficulties getting care.⁵

APAL's Initiatives

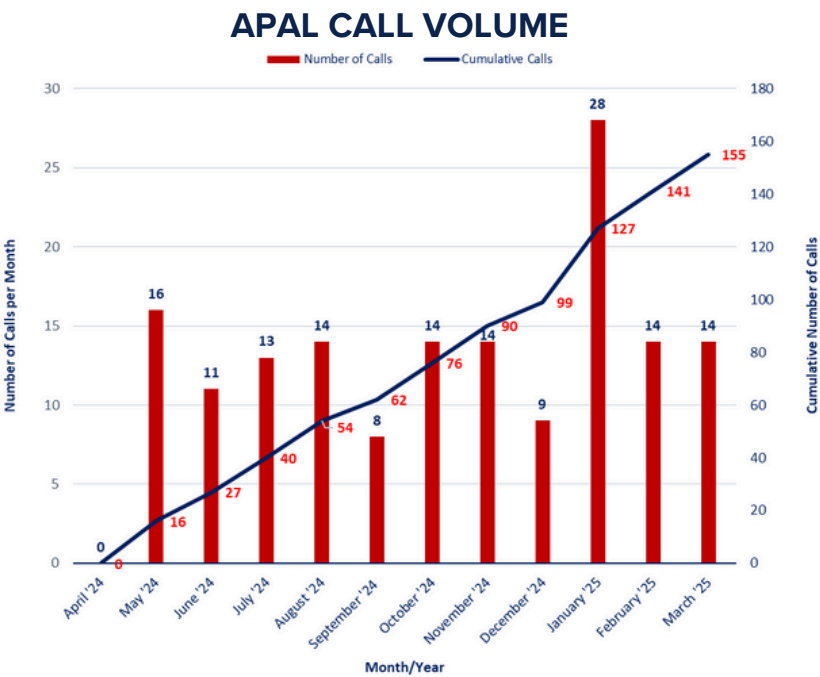
- ▶ **Direct access to free pediatric psychiatry consultation statewide:** APAL offers free, real-time pediatric psychiatric consultations to support providers in managing behavioral health and substance use concerns in youth. County-specific resources are also available to assist families.
- ▶ **Increasing access to evidence-based behavioral health care for children and young people:** APAL is committed to helping providers stay up to date on current recommendations and develop evidence-based treatment plans for substance use disorders during the critical developmental periods of childhood and adolescence, when early intervention can have the greatest impact.
- ▶ **Provide education in pediatric psychiatry:** APAL offers monthly virtual grand rounds and on-request education sessions, all with free CME. Recorded webinars and CME presentations are available on our website, along with a blog featuring expert updates on evolving treatment guidelines. We also collaborate with partners on a monthly ECHO.

Across all our initiatives, APAL is dedicated to reducing barriers and promoting fair access to high-quality pediatric behavioral health services—especially for rural and historically overlooked communities throughout Arizona with limited access to services.

Outcomes & Impact by Initiative

APAL's inaugural year proudly highlights significant achievements in meeting our mission. Our focus on fair access, comprehensive provider support, and robust education initiatives has laid a strong foundation for continued success.

#1 Direct access to free pediatric psychiatry consultation statewide

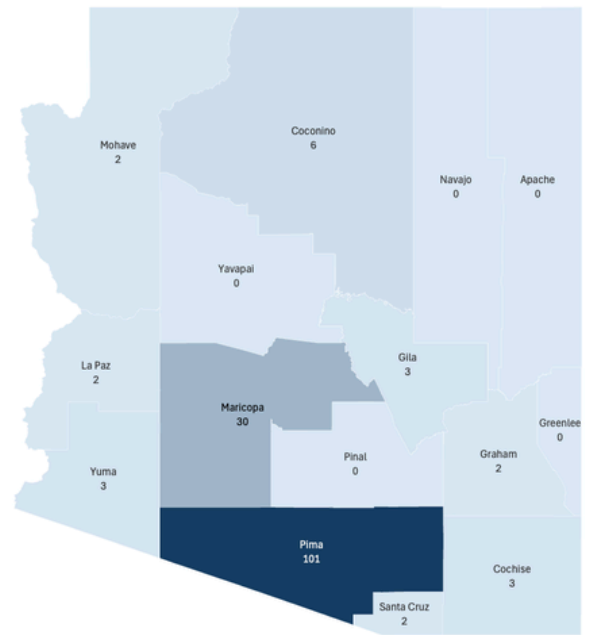


- ▶ Since launching in May 2024, we've received over **150** calls, surpassing the performance of comparable programs in other states.
- ▶ Over **20%** of APAL's total number of calls occurred in January 2025.
- ▶ Call volume is projected to increase in 2025 assuming continued program operations.

- ▶ APAL has provided essential support to counties with limited pediatric care.
- ▶ APAL has made significant strides in reaching rural areas, receiving calls from over **75%** of Arizona's counties in under a year.
- ▶ APAL also serves as a crucial resource in rural areas for treating pediatric behavioral health or developmental disorders.

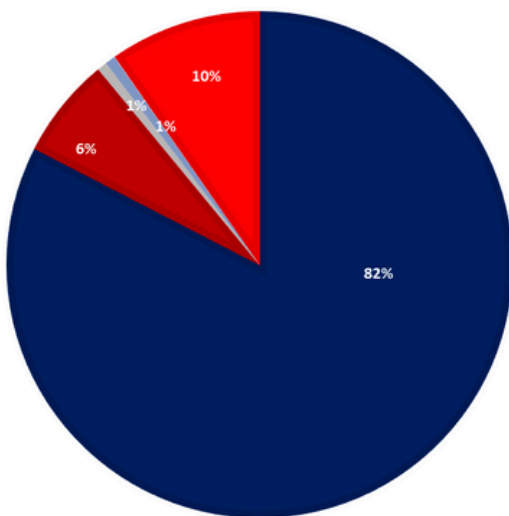
Calls by County

Number of Calls
0 101



Provider Types

■ MD/DO ■ NP ■ PA ■ RN ■ Other



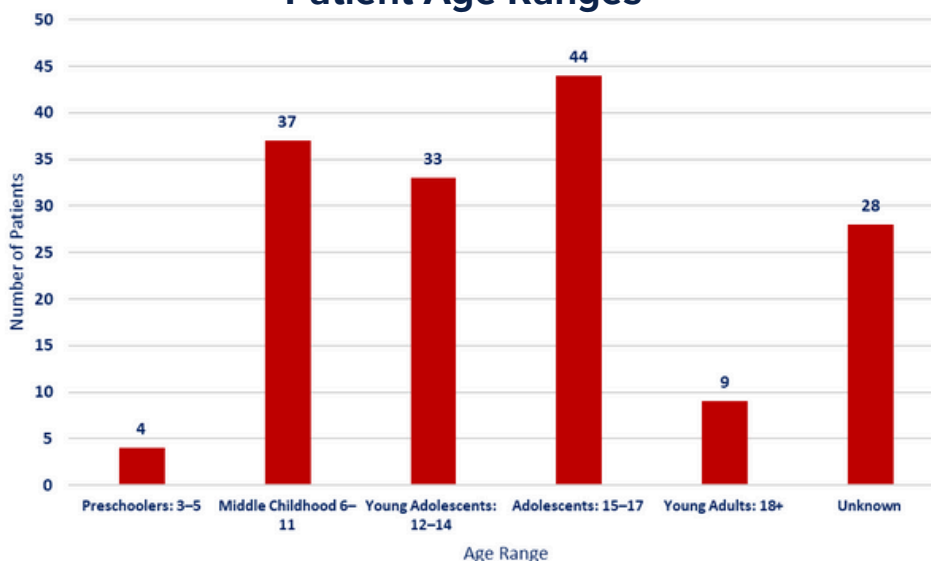
Who is Calling?

APAL has proudly supported providers statewide, receiving calls from MDs, DOs, NPs, PAs, psychologists, other prescribers and care team members.

Who are they calling about?

The children and adolescents for whom APAL consultations are requested span across all groups.

Patient Age Ranges

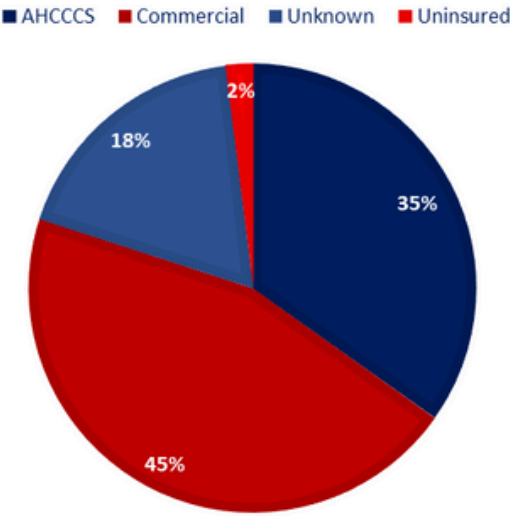


- ▶ The majority of APAL calls are for youth in the adolescent and young adolescent age groups—the same age range with the highest rates of suicide in Arizona.

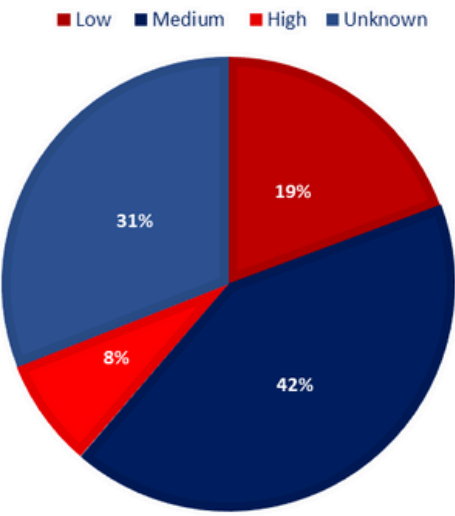
We value access to care for all.

20% of calls received were for patients in areas of low economic background. This exceeds the estimated 13% of Arizonans living at or below the poverty line and 30% of Arizonans who qualify for state Medicaid insurance.

Patient Insurance



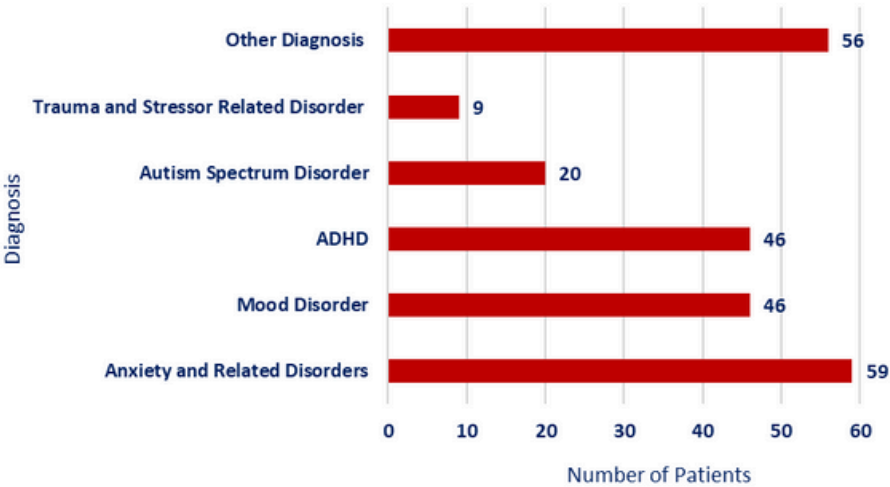
Economic Background



#2 Increasing access to evidence-based behavioral health care for children and young people.

With an astounding 39% call-back rate, APAL’s impact extends beyond initial consultations. The high rate of continued consultation underscores the value of APAL in supporting primary care and frontline providers as they manage complex pediatric behavioral health needs.

Patient Diagnoses



- ▶ Anxiety disorders account for the largest volume of calls, highlighting the need for early intervention
- ▶ ADHD remains a key concern, with many providers seeking support in medication management and addressing comorbidities.
- ▶ Mood disorders, including depression and bipolar disorder, prompt consideration related to suicidality and treatment-resistant cases.

Provider Feedback

- ▶ Providers find APAL's guidance highly valuable in case management, leading to improved care coordination and decision-making.
- ▶ High likelihood of repeat consultations suggests that APAL is a trusted and integral resource for pediatric behavioral health support in Arizona.



150+ Calls
made to the
Pediatric Line



from **125+**
Healthcare
Professionals



over 200
Practices
Enrolled



65% of Arizona's
counties reached



16min average
call time

100%

of providers
who called
APAL stated
they were
extremely likely
to call again in
the future.

100%

of providers
stated
consulting
APAL assisted
them in making
treatment
decisions.

92%

of providers
stated the
information
they received
was helpful in
managing the
case they
called about.

92%

of providers
stated the
consultation
helped them
feel more
confident about
providing care
for their patient.

Testimonials

“

Providing timely, specialized care for children and adolescents facing behavioral health challenges is critical because it can significantly affect their development and well-being. I've encountered many young patients who were struggling with conditions like anxiety, ADHD, and depression, but due to long wait times to see a psychiatrist, they were left without the support they needed. Thanks to APAL, I am able to offer these patients a plan that keeps them on track and ensures they aren't left without the care they need. It's an invaluable resource for both providers and patients in Arizona.

-- **Helene Felman, MD FAAPP**
Banner Health

“

Having the ability to consult a psychiatrist in real time has been a game changer. It brings me so much confidence and allows for much quicker treatment plans that my patients deserve. My patients have also been happy to know that a child psychiatrist has helped with the plan, and each family is lucky to be getting the best care in the office that they know and trust.

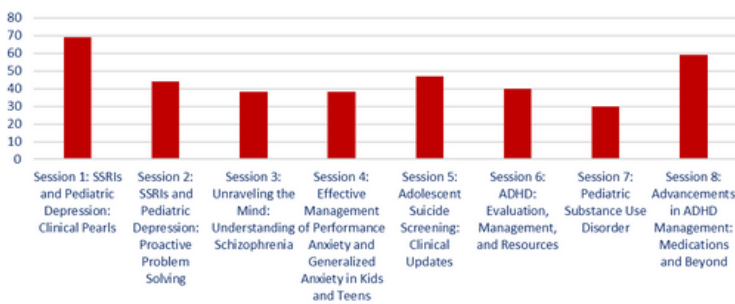
-- **Lauren Hayward, MD FAAP**
Mountain View Pediatrics

#3 Provide education in pediatric psychiatry

- ▶ In collaboration with the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, APAL hosts a monthly ECHO session for CME credit.
- ▶ APAL offers asynchronous educational content for use in pediatric, family medicine, and psychiatry residency and fellowship programs across the state. These on-demand materials provide flexible access to foundational behavioral health knowledge for future clinicians. Educational materials are available on our website including screening questionnaires, treatment algorithms, webinars, blog posts and grand rounds.
- ▶ In conjunction with our Perinatal Access Line, pediatric providers can attend our APAL Grand Rounds sessions for CME credits.
- ▶ The Pediatric Line conducted 20 personalized education sessions for organizations through 2025.
- ▶ APAL has exhibited at multiple conferences including the Pediatrics on the Rocks, Rural Health Conference, Arizona Psychiatric Society, AAP Pediatrics Practical CME Course, Women's and Children's Health Conference, Pediatric Update Conference, and Arizona Center for Rural Health.

ECHO Session Attendees - 365 total for 2024

■ Number of Providers Registered for Sessions



ECHO Session Evaluations Revealed:

- ▶ **98%** total overall satisfaction rate
- ▶ **96%** of attendees stated that information provided will contribute to their patient care
- ▶ **95%** of attendees stated these sessions increased their confidence in evaluating patients
- ▶ **98%** of attendees would recommend these education sessions to a colleague based on its impact to their practice/patient care

APAL's Outreach Efforts

In our first year of outreach - without a dedicated marketing team - we connected with over 350 clinics across Arizona, visited more than 200 practices across metro and rural Arizona, and built strong visibility through both community and professional events. Through a strategic mix of in-person visits, targeted mailings, phone outreach, and participation in key community and professional events, we've expanded our footprint and deepened relationships across the state.

73%

11 out of 15 Arizona counties visited in-person, including rural areas

200+

In-Person Introductions to APAL

20+

Events attended to date

350+

Direct phone outreach made and mailers sent to pediatric practices throughout all of Arizona

History of APAL

Operational

November 2022

The Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line received funding from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

June 2023

The Perinatal Line officially launched at half time, Monday - Friday, 12:30p.m. - 4:30p.m.

November 2023

The Perinatal Line launched full-time access, Monday - Friday, 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

February 2024

The Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line received funding from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). These were ARPA dollars.

May 2024

The Pediatric Line officially launched at half time, Monday - Friday, 12:30p.m. - 4:30p.m.

January 2025

The Pediatric Line launched full-time access, Monday - Friday, 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

February 2025

The Perinatal and Pediatric Line launched full-time, live resource assistance to not only providers, but all callers in need of assistance with perinatal and pediatric resources in Arizona.

Milestones

November 2022 - June 2023

APAL created infrastructure and developed organizational procedures from November 2022-June 2023.

October 2023

APAL founders developed principles for the Pediatric Line and requested AHCCCS funding.

January 2024

The Perinatal Line had provided over **100 consultations**.

October 2024

The Pediatric Line had made virtual outreach to over **400 clinics**, visited over 50 clinics in person, and attended multiple conferences to distribute materials and resources to providers and the public.

January 2025

The Pediatric Line has provided over **100 consultations** in 60% of Arizona's counties and over 237 pediatric practices in total had engaged in some way with the Pediatric Line.

March 2025

The Pediatric Line had hit over **150 total calls** from over 65% of Arizona's counties.

APAL Needs Your Help to Continue Its Efforts

As we look ahead, the Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) remains committed to strengthening pediatric behavioral health care across the state. Despite our demonstrated impact and growing demand, APAL's funding was abruptly terminated due to federal budget cuts that eliminated the grant supporting the program.

**Without immediate and sustainable funding,
this essential program is at risk of shutting down.**

Untreated behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents come with a steep price—costing the U.S. nearly \$11 billion each year in long-term societal and healthcare impacts. Pediatric behavioral health issues are tied to an estimated **\$31 billion** annually in healthcare spending⁷. In Arizona, where resources for children's behavioral health are stretched thin—especially in rural and limited-access areas—these costs are likely even more burdensome. That's where APAL makes a difference. By equipping primary care providers with real-time psychiatric consultation and support, APAL helps children receive timely, effective care—often before conditions worsen. This not only improves outcomes for young people and their families, but also reduces other healthcare costs.

APAL is a smart investment that pays off—both in lives changed and dollars saved. In fact, **APAL can cover every child in Arizona for less than \$0.75 per child per year.**

We are calling on partners, stakeholders, and funders to act **now**. Arizona's children, families, and frontline providers deserve continued access to timely, expert behavioral health support. The need is real, the demand is growing—and with your support, APAL can continue to meet it.

Please contact us to discuss ways to keep this vital state resource in operation.

Contact Us:

APAL.arizona.edu | 888-290-1336 | team@apal.arizona.edu

SOURCES

1. Mental Health America: Ranking the States; 2022
2. ASFP.org/state-facts
3. AACAP Fact Sheet: Improving Access to Mental Health: Reducing Mental Health Stigma; Sep 2019.
4. CDC 1991-2023 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.
5. ADBHS Adolescent Mental Health Report: Trends in Mental Health, Oct 2024.
6. Children's Action Alliance. (2024, February 25). 2024 Arizona KIDS COUNT Data Book. https://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Childrens-Action-Alliance_Kids-Count-Book_02-25-25-1.pdf
7. Loo TM, Altman M, Bravata DM, Whaley C. Medical Spending Among US Households With Children With a Mental Health Condition Between 2017 and 2021. JAMA Netw Open. 2024;7(3):e241860. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.1860

Meet the Team

OUR DIRECTORS



SAIRA KALIA, MD DIRECTOR

APAL's Director Dr. Saira Kalia is a clinician, educator, and leader. She has made significant contributions to the women's behavioral health field and is known for her commitment to patient-centered care and dedication to education. She has a wealth of administrative experience having served as an outpatient medical director. She is a distinguished educator and has won multiple teaching awards. She has launched both the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line and the Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line. Her recognition as a COM-T Women in Medicine Torchbearer underscores her trailblazing contributions to behavioral health, education, and supporting access to care for all patients.



JACQUE ESQUE, MD CO-DIRECTOR

APAL's Co-director Dr. Jacquelin Esque is an experienced child and adolescent (CAP) psychiatrist at the Banner - University Medicine Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Clinic. Dr. Esque is passionate about increasing access to quality behavioral healthcare for children and teens. In her clinical practice, Dr. Esque has seen the value of working closely with pediatricians and other primary care providers in the community, to collaborate and help provide education, resources, and treatment ideas. Dr. Esque is thrilled to be a part of APAL to provide this resource for frontline care providers across the state.

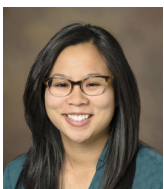
FACULTY



KATHY W. SMITH, MD

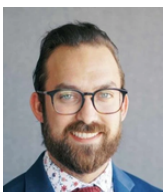
Dr. Kathy W. Smith is a highly accomplished child and adolescent psychiatrist and educator, serving as Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson. With over 20 years of experience, she is a recognized leader in the assessment and treatment of perinatal mood disorders, as well as the evaluation and stabilization of psychiatric emergencies.

CAP CONSULTANTS



JENNIFER TRAN, DO

Dr. Tran is board-certified in general psychiatry and child and adolescent psychiatry. Dr. Tran has been dedicated to providing compassionate, evidence-based care, focusing on the mental health and well-being of children, adolescents, and adults. Her clinical expertise is complemented by a commitment to advancing the field through continuous learning and patient-centered practice.



COREY NIELSEN, DO

Cory Nielsen, DO is a board-certified adult and child and adolescent psychiatrist born in Phoenix, AZ. Dr. Nielsen is passionate about cultivating a genuine therapeutic alliance with his patients and their family and incorporates psychodynamic psychotherapy as well as mindfulness into his methods.

STAFF



ANA RAMOS, BA PROGRAM MANAGER

Ana Ramos is the APAL team's Program Manager and is responsible for daily oversight of the line. Ana functions as a nexus between clinical service and project management, as well as overseeing data integration and interpretation.



MEGAN STOLTZ, BS CLINICAL NAVIGATOR

As APAL's Clinical Navigators, Megan is excited to spread the word across Arizona about the support that can be provided through the pediatric line. She is passionate about increasing accessibility to mental health resources for children and families.



ALEXANDRA HARRIS, RESOURCE SPECIALIST

Alexandra (Alex) Harris is a dedicated public health professional with experience in health education, community collaboration, and research. Throughout her career she has focused on advocating for community members and supporting programs that uplift individuals.



AMANDA OKPISZ, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

As APAL's Administrative Support Assistant, Amanda is dedicated to providing exceptional support to the APAL team to ensure the ongoing success of the pediatric line.

Find us online at APAL.arizona.edu



Schedule a Consult



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