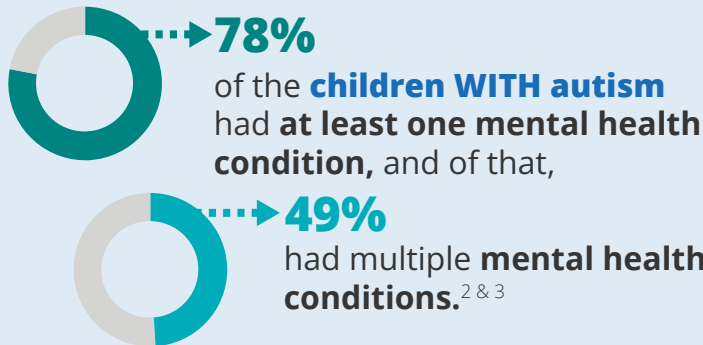
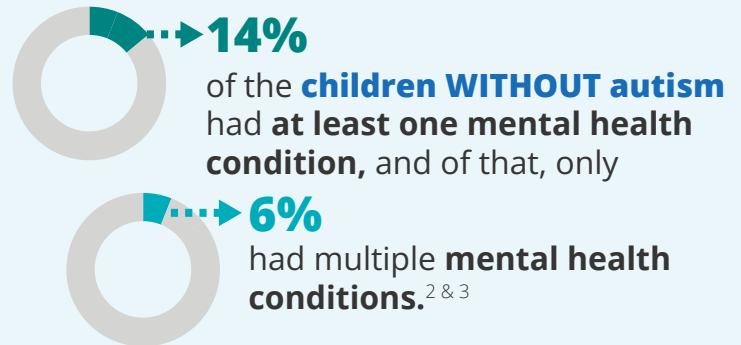


Researchers analyzed data from more than 42,000 caregivers of children ages 3-17 and **found that mental health conditions in children with autism are much more prevalent compared to children without autism.** The study included parents or caregivers of **1,131 children with autism.**¹

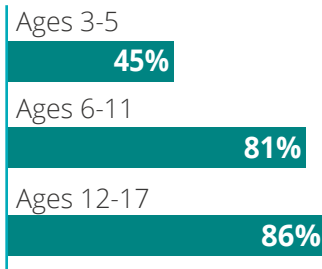
Research found that:



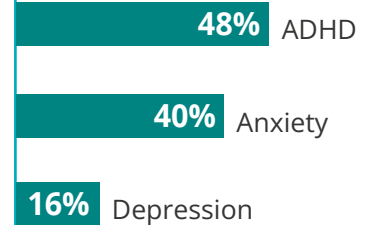
In comparison:



Mental health conditions increase with age for children WITH autism.²



Children WITH autism, also had ADHD, anxiety, and/or depression at higher rates.^{2 & 3}



TARGETED INTERVENTIONS:

Educational staff can provide:

- ▶ Predictability to prevent or reduce anxiety
- ▶ Preparedness for changes in routine
- ▶ Visual supports
- ▶ Visual schedules
- ▶ Teaching emotional vocabulary
 - » Cards with facial expressions
 - » Social narratives
 - » Guided discussions
- ▶ Self-regulation skills, such as breathing techniques
- ▶ Emotional scales to help implement self-regulation skills

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO IN THE CLASSROOM?

It is important to prioritize primary prevention ([Tier 1](#)) practices that establish positive, predictable, and safe environments and routines. These practices promote wellness and are associated with desired educational, developmental, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes.⁴

COMMON BARRIERS

Mental health conditions in children with autism sometimes go undiagnosed and untreated based on barriers such as:

- ▶ Children with autism may already have a complex set of needs that **require specialized support and treatment.**⁵
- ▶ Symptoms of many mental health disorders **may be mistaken for, or attributed to, the child's autism.**⁵
- ▶ Children with autism may find it **difficult to identify and express emotions or feelings.**

¹ National Survey of Children's Health - Results were published December, 2020

² Kerns, C. M., Rast, J. E., & Shattuck, P. T. (2020). Prevalence and correlates of caregiver-reported mental health conditions in youth with autism spectrum disorder in the United States. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 82(1). <https://doi.org/10.4088/jcp.20m13242>

³ Hossain, M. M., Khan, N., Sultana, A., Ma, P., McKyer, E. L. J., Ahmed, H. U., & Purohit, N. (2020). Prevalence of comorbid psychiatric disorders among people with autism spectrum disorder: An umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Psychiatry Research*, 287, 112922.

⁴ Center on PBIS. (October, 2022). What does research say about the effects of Tier 1 PBIS for students with disabilities? Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon.

⁵ Lai, Alvina G et al. "Autism and mental illness in children and young people require standardised approaches for assessment and treatment." *The Lancet regional health, Europe* vol. 16 100360. 29 Mar. 2022, doi:10.1016/j.lanepe.2022.100360

AUTISM AND MENTAL HEALTH IN TEXAS SCHOOLS:

The Texas Education Agency promotes a [Multi-tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) framework that is based on tiers of support beginning with universal supports provided to all students and increasing in levels of supports that range from targeted to intensive interventions. The MTSS framework is part of a comprehensive and aligned Safe and Supportive Schools Program.

Characteristics of autism and symptoms of some common mental health issues **can overlap and be difficult to distinguish**. However, because interventions can look quite different when targeting characteristics or symptoms associated with autism and mental health issues, it is important not to assume that a child's symptoms are always due to autism and that a co-occurring mental health condition might not also be present.

In Texas, for every **7 students** served through special education, **at least 1** has a primary diagnosis of autism



15.4% students WITH autism as a primary diagnosis in Texas.²

5-POINT SCALE (ANXIETY):¹

A 5-point scale can be used to teach self-regulation skills to students with autism and anxiety. More information regarding professional development and tools for educational staff working with students with autism can be found on the Texas SPED Support website.

	FEELS LIKE:	WHAT I CAN DO:
5	I'm going to breakdown (cry, begin pacing and bang my head).	I can leave the room with permission and go to home base.
4	My stomach is starting to hurt and I'm having difficulty concentrating.	I can ask to talk privately to an adult. I can listen to calming music with headphones.
3	I'm feeling uneasy and I'm starting to sweat.	I can refer to my coping cards and use deep breathing.
2	I feel ok. I can handle the situation.	Self-talk and reassure myself that I can do it.
1	I feel great. No problem!	

TRAUMA AND SUICIDE IN AUTISM FACTS:

People with autism are



6x more likely to **attempt death by suicide** and

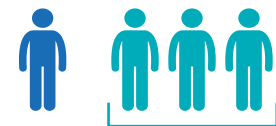
7x more likely to **die by suicide** compared to those who do not have autism.^{3 & 4}

Women with autism are



13x more likely to **die by suicide** compared to women who do not have autism.⁵

People with autism are



2-3x more likely to **experience trauma** than typically developing peers.⁶



Call **988** for a suicide & crisis lifeline

¹ www.autismcircuit.net

² PEIMS - 2022-2023 School Year

³ Chen, M.H., Pan, T.L., Lan, W.H., Hsu, J.W., Huang, K.L., Su, T.P., Li, C.T., Lin, W.C., Wei, H.T., Chen, T.J., & Bai, Y.M. (2017). Risk of suicide attempts among adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorder. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 78(9). <https://doi.org/10.4088/jcp.16m11100>

⁴ Hirvikoski, T., Mittendorfer-Rutz, E., Boman, M., Larsson, H., Lichtenstein, P., & Bölte, S. (2016). Premature mortality in autism spectrum disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 208(3), 232-238. doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.114.160192

⁵ South M, Costa AP, McMorris C. Death by suicide among people with autism: Beyond Zebrafish. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021;4(1):e2034018. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.34018

⁶ Dell'Osso, L., Gesi, C., & Carmassi, C. (2016). Suicide and autism spectrum disorder: The role of trauma [Editorial]. *Journal of Psychopathology*, 22(2), 107-109.