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Guest Editor's Introduction

The Need for a Broader, More Inclusive Approach to Child and Adolescent Suicide Prevention

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Child and adolescent suicide prevention is a major public health concern: Between 2007 and 2021, suicide rates rose by 115% among 10-14 year olds and by 38% among 15-17 year olds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Yet suicide risk is not evenly distributed across the population: Though rates of suicide have typically been lower overall for Black Americans, as compared with White Americans, from 2010 to 2020, suicide rates among Black 15-19 year olds increased by 108.9%, as compared with a 31.9% increase among White 15-19 year olds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Lindsey and colleagues (2019) reported that between 1991 and 2017 suicide attempts decreased among most racial and ethnic groups, but increased among Black youth. Sexual minority youth are also at greater risk of suicide-related thoughts and behaviors, with data from the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicating that 35.5% of lesbian or gay high school students and 40.2% of bisexual high school students have seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months, compared with only 11.6% of their heterosexual peers (Gaylor et al., 2023).

Despite these alarming numbers, the last 20 years have seen substantial improvements in suicide prevention research, with the development of several prominent theories of suicide (e.g., Bryan et al., 2020; Klonsky & May, 2015; Van Orden et al., 2010), as well as advances in preventive interventions (e.g., Stanley et al., 2018; Swift et al., 2021). Yet few of these interventions have been empirically extended to youth (e.g., Asarnow et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2020) and minoritized youth are particularly underrepresented in the suicide prevention development literature (Sumlin et al., 2023).

It is critical that recent advances in suicide prevention science be extended and adapted for use with children and adolescents. Given the increased rates of suicide-related thoughts and behaviors among minoritized children and adolescents, particular care to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion is needed so that future research and prevention efforts are directed toward populations of youth with the greatest risk. While central to the provision of mental and behavioral health services, to date, a substantial proportion of research on suicide prevention has focused on traditional health care settings (e.g., outpatient mental health care; Sinyor et al., 2020). Comparatively, less work has considered specific at-risk populations of children and adolescents or the use of other healthcare settings for screening and service delivery, such as emergency departments or schools (e.g., King et al., 2018; Rufino et al., 2022; Singer et al., 2019).

Addressing the pressing public health concern posed by child and adolescent suicide will likely require a broad public health approach, combining traditional individual service paradigms with non-traditional methodologies and points of intervention such as primary care providers, schools, and community organizations. Additionally, policy-level changes

may be needed to support broad and equitable access to care, to improve the quality of suicide prevention services through behavioral healthcare training standards, and to bring evidence-based services to scale in the community.

This special issue of the *Journal of Applied Research on Children* seeks to provide insight into the future directions needed to advance child and adolescent suicide prevention. The issue will present a range of perspectives from content experts and will feature papers that (a) advance our understanding of child and adolescent suicide prevention across multiple populations, sectors, or settings and (b) leverage science to inform suggestions for policy and practice changes with the potential to advance youth suicide prevention. The papers will feature empirical perspectives on supporting underserved or understudied populations and leveraging underutilized settings or intervention paradigms, with the goal of identifying a broader and more inclusive approach to child and adolescent suicide prevention.

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