

# 2022 Psychiatric Intake Response Center Annual Report



# A Letter from the PIRC Director

Dear Community Partners, Providers, and Friends:

Mental health is a priority at Children's of Alabama. So are many other chronic conditions receiving our world-class care. But some are unaware of the extent and impact of pediatric behavioral health challenges. Patients may feel ashamed, families don't seek help, and both avoid talking about their experiences. Due to stigma, many think mental health concerns will be misunderstood or are a moral failing. But, it is not a failing or sign of weakness. In fact, there is bravery and strength in knowing when you need help. I'd like to share a story of one mother and son's experience:

Stefanie felt the color drain from her face as she looked down at the phone and read her son's text, "I think I might kill myself." Uncertainty and fear gripped her mind and body. Her hands shook while dialing the number. Then, a reassuring voice on the other end of the line made her feel less alone.

This is how Children's of Alabama Development Operations Manager Stefanie Blakely and her 12-year-old son, Liam Blakely, began his journey to better mental health. "I was lost and in a complete panic as I put my 12-year-old son, Liam, in the car and started driving," she said. "I wasn't sure what I was doing or where I was going. I just knew we were in crisis.

"Liam's threat of suicide and his first incident of self-harm that night made me worry that I would regret taking him home, but I wasn't sure what type of situation merited a trip to the ED. As I drove, I suddenly remembered the PIRC and I was hopeful that someone could help."

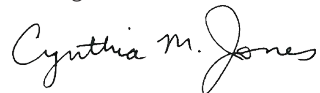
PIRC Therapist Ashley Loftis asked her to describe what was happening and recommended they go to the Emergency Department. "Her voice was compassionate, confident, soothing, and strong and made me feel like someone was there holding my hand and guiding me to do the next best thing for my son," Blakely said.

"When I ask Liam about that call now, he says that Ashley saved his life that night," she said. Stefanie added that going to the Emergency Department not only kept him safe but also put them in touch with the other resources he needed, such as, the Behavioral Health Department's Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) and the Ireland Center's outpatient behavioral health services.

She said if Loftis hadn't been on the other end of the line that night, Liam wouldn't be thriving as well as he is today. "We've made a lot of progress in the past six months. I will forever be grateful for the care Ashley gave us that night."

I hope this story not only inspires you, but also dissolves the stigma of mental health. The Blakely's decision to share one of the most vulnerable and frightening times in their lives is no different than other families in crisis. Every year, thousands of families seek life-saving behavioral and mental health care at Children's of Alabama.

With gratitude,



Cynthia "Cindy" M. Jones, MA, LPC-S, NCC  
PIRC Director, Children's of Alabama

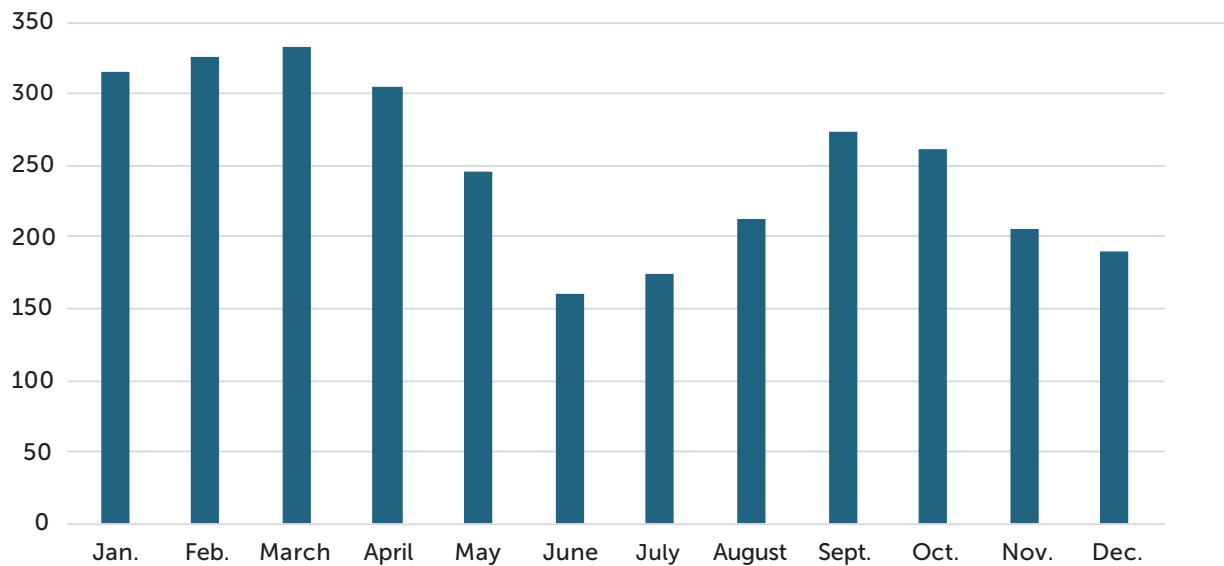


*Children's of Alabama Development Operations Manager Stefanie Blakely and her son, Liam Blakely, say they are grateful for the life-saving help they received from the PIRC.*

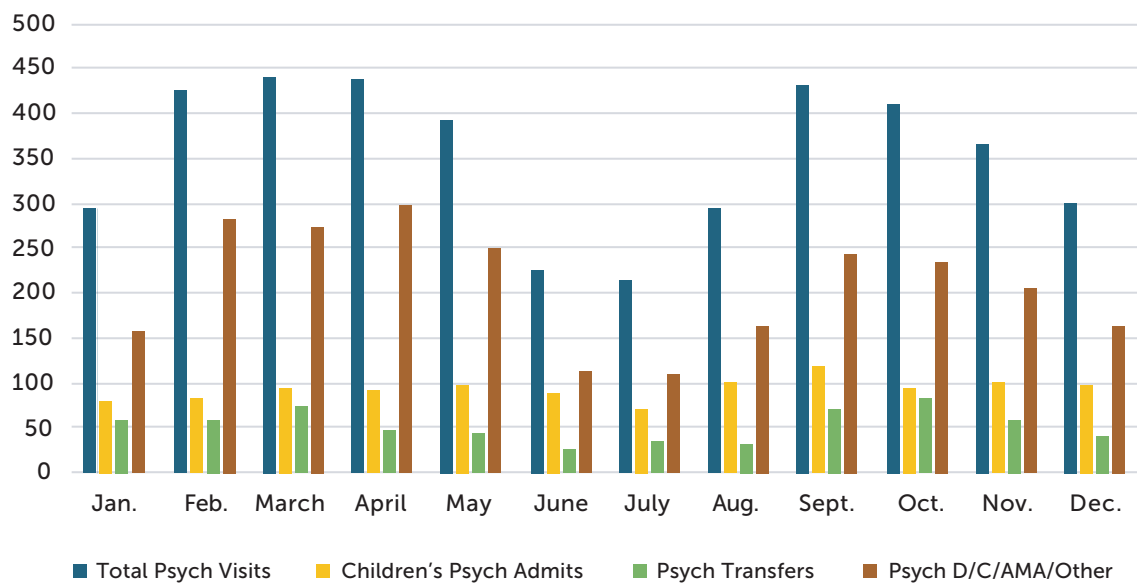
*Pictured on front cover: Children's of Alabama Development Operations Manager Stefanie Blakely; Stefanie's son, Liam Blakely; and PIRC Therapist Ashley Loftis meet in-person for the first time.*

# PIRC Statistics

## Total PIRC Calls



## Total Emergency Department Psychiatric Consults



# PIRC Team



*PIRC Therapist Ashley Loftis, center, is given the IMPACT Award by Children's President and CEO Tom Shufflebarger, left, and COO Andy Loehr, right. Loftis received the award for the excellent care and intervention she provided to Children's Development Operations Manager Stefanie Blakely and her son, Liam Blakely.*



*PIRC Therapist Susan Smith, left, and Clinical Psychologist Nina Reynolds, right, collaborated and provided support to a family and patient with medical and psychiatric complications. The patient came to Children's after a PIRC call with Smith revealed more than a possible psychiatric concern.*

PIRC Team members make significant impacts in the lives of callers, patients, and caregivers. There are countless other occasions, like the Blakely's, where during a PIRC call or a Children's Emergency Department (ED) visit, members assessed a mental health concern and helped stabilize what is often a difficult, confusing, and frightening time for those involved.

In 2022, the pandemic continued, but with vaccinations and precautions illnesses decreased. But mental health concerns kept pace with the year before. About 3,000 people called the PIRC seeking mental health resources statewide. More than 4,200 patients received services from Children's ED medical staff and Psychiatric Consult team, including Psychiatrists, UAB Fellows, Physicians' Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and PIRC Therapists. The ED visits represented a 5% increase over 2021. Altogether, more than 7,200 callers and patients received PIRC and Psychiatric Consult team services.

The sustained volume of behavioral health patients meant the Psychiatric Consult and PIRC teams and Child Life Services continued to provide therapeutic interventions especially to those boarding in the ED. PIRC Therapists provided brief, individual therapy and virtual Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group therapy. Child Life helped Hand-in-Paw, animal-assisted therapy, provide therapeutic support to patients, families, and staff weekly. All team members provided coping kits for use in the hospital and at home.

In response to the youth mental health crisis and increased demand for behavioral health services, Children's senior leadership, the ED and Behavioral Health Department leaders and staff began planning in spring of 2022 for a 16-bed expansion in the ED. The added beds would be designated and designed for behavioral health patients. The expansion would address specific needs of this patient population, increase patient and family satisfaction, improve patient throughput, and expand the ED's capacity to serve all patients. The expected completion date would be one year later, and the new beds are now in use.

Community outreach continued to be a focus of the PIRC. Many of these events focused on mental and healthcare providers and school personal. Team members took part in some 48 community events statewide, totaling 378 hours. Of the 1,565 attendees at these events, 2,988 were providers 647 were school representatives, a 39% increase from 2021.

# PIRC Team



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



PIRC Director Cindy Jones, PIRC Therapist Shannon Messina, PHP Manager Lauren Byrd, Senior Executive Administrator Stacy White, and PIRC Therapist Matt Foster walked in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Birmingham event, representing Children's Behavioral Health Department, which won for most team members the third year in a row.

## 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

**Stacy White, MBA, MSHA, FACHE,** Senior Executive Leader, Behavioral Health

**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)

## PIRC Mental Health Therapists

**Ariel Armstrong, ALC**

**Susan Bennett-Smith,**  
LICSW, PIP

**Marisa Borne, LMSW**

**Ahmad Brewer, LICSW, PIP**

**Mindy Cavender, LMSW**

**Melissa Edwards, LPC**

**Jordan Elliott, ALC**

**Alex Faust, LPC**

**Matt Foster, LPC**

**Jalana Johnson, LPC**

**Carmen Lambert, LICSW**

**Naren Leopard, LICSW, PIP**

**Ashley Loftis, ALC**

**Shannon Messina, LICSW**

**Tahuna Rembert, ALC**

**Deanna Schultes, LPC**

**Amory Strange, LMSW**

## PIRC Impact

- 2,998 calls, averaging 250 a month.
- 4,235 Emergency Department psychiatric consults, averaging 353 a month.
- 7,233 callers and patients received PIRC and Psychiatric Consult team services.
- 1,702 PIRC database providers statewide and surrounding states, a 6.25% increase from 2021.
- 2,900 BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama New Directions mental health providers added or updated in the database.
- 5,615 mental health/health professionals, school representatives, and community members were a part of community outreach, a 39% increase from 2021.

# PIRC Advisory Committee

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.

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

**Kyle Echols**, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Private Practice

**Susan Griffin**, 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), 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, Community Advocate

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

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

**Kathy Marino**, Director of Admissions, Pinnacle Behavior Health

**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)

**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

**Stacy White**, Senior Executive Leader of Behavioral Health, Children's of Alabama

**Erica Wilson**, Licensed Professional Counselor, Private Practice



*PIRC Advisory Committee member Erica Wilson exhibited and presented on PIRC services at Alabaster's annual Health Fair.*

# PIRC Community Outreach

As invited speakers, exhibitors, educators, and sponsors of 48 events statewide, totaling 387 hours, PIRC information was shared with 5,615 attendees:



**2,988**

**Health & Mental Health  
Care Professionals**



**647**

**School  
Representatives**



**1,980**

**Community  
Members**

## Media

- AL.com
- Alabama Baptist
- Birmingham Business Journal
- 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline and World Suicide Day social media posts
- Montgomery Advertiser
- Shelby County Reporter
- Madison Record
- Style Blueprint, a magazine guide to southeastern regional lifestyle
- Good Grit, a Southern culture magazine
- WBRC 6 TV Birmingham
- WSFA 12 TV Montgomery
- WVTM 13 TV Birmingham Telethon and Day of Giving
- WVUA 23 TV Tuscaloosa
- WTVY 95.5 Music & Miracles Dothan Radiothon

# PIRC Community Outreach



*PIRC Medical Director Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez spoke about "Children's Mental Health: Understanding Social Media's Effects as we Move Forward with COVID-19" at Children's of Alabama's Mental Health Conference.*



*Alabama Mental Health Commissioner Kim Boswell spoke about the impact of Pediatric Access to Tele-Mental Health Services (PATHS) has had on 65 rural pediatricians and family practice physicians statewide at the PATHS annual conference. PIRC was an exhibitor at the conference and is a partner of PATHS.*

As the youth mental health crisis continued, collaborations, partnerships and outreach helped the PIRC better understand and meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children and adolescents. Here are some highlights from the year:

## Mental Health/Healthcare Providers

**Children's of Alabama Mental Health Awareness Conference:** PIRC Medical Director Jesse Tobias "Toby" Martinez spoke about "Children's Mental Health: Understanding Social Media's Effects as we Move Forward with COVID-19" at the annual conference. There were 450 mental health providers in attendance either in-person or via Zoom.

**Pediatric Access to Tele-Mental Health Services (PATHS) Annual Conference:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones exhibited on PIRC services at the statewide conference of 65 rural pediatricians and family practice physicians enrolled in the PATHS program. PATHS provides ECHO training/education and consultation services to physicians and tele-mental health care to their patients. The PIRC's database of statewide mental health resources is available to PATHS participants who may refer a patient for further mental health care in their communities.

**Alabama Marriage and Family Therapists (ALAMFT):** PIRC Therapist Jalana Johnson presented and exhibited on PIRC services at the ALAMFT's annual conference. PIRC was a sponsor of the event, which had more than 100 licensed marriage and family therapists in attendance.

**Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA):** PIRC Therapist Matt Foster attended the ALCA's three-day annual conference where he had opportunities to promote PIRC services to more than 1,300 licensed professional counselors.



# PIRC Community Outreach



PIRC Director Cindy Jones explains PIRC services to a pediatrician attending the Pediatric Access to Tele-Mental Health Services (PATHS) annual conference.



PIRC Director Cindy Jones and PATHS Director and PIRC Advisory Committee member Susan Griffin exhibited and participated in a panel discussion on statewide mental health resources at the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AL-AAP) fall conference.

## Mental Health/Healthcare Providers (cont.)

**Alabama Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics (AL-AAP):** PIRC Director Cindy Jones and PATHS Director and PIRC Advisory Committee member Susan Griffin attended the Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update conference. They exhibited and took part in a panel discussion on statewide mental health resources. More than 100 pediatricians attended. Griffin and PATHS Coordinator Kristin Adams attended the AL-AAP spring conference and provided information on PIRC services.

**Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA):** PIRC Director Cindy Jones presented to 19 participants statewide on PIRC services. ACHIA's mission is to improve health outcomes by fostering a culture of continuous quality improvement through partnerships with practitioners, payers, families, and organizations that deliver care to Alabama children.

**National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP):** Psychiatric Consult Team Nurse Practitioner Courtney Reeves presented on mental health concerns related to childhood obesity and PIRC services at the Alabama Chapter of NAPNAP Fall Mini Conference. There were 20 Alabama nurse practitioners who attended in-person and virtually.

**No More Martyrs Mental Health Equity and Liberation Summit:** For the fourth year, PIRC sponsored the virtual event held nationwide. Latinx, Asian, African American, LGBT and Native American speakers shared their perspectives to more than 100 attendees on what it means to provide culturally responsive care and services.

# PIRC Community Outreach



PIRC Advisory Committee member Erica Wilson, left, and PIRC Therapist Carmen Lambert, right, talk about the PIRC to those attending a mental health and wellness fair at Railroad Park.



PIRC Director Cindy Jones is pictured with Alabama Suicide Prevention and Resources Coalition (ASPARC) Executive Director Cheryl Dodson, right, and ASPARC employee Stacia Tate, far right, at Birmingham City Schools' inaugural Community Teen Summit: Suicide Prevention.

## Schools

**Resources at the Railroad Mental Health and Wellness Fair:** PIRC Therapist Carmen Lambert and PIRC Advisory Committee Member Erica Wilson 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, Fairfield, Jefferson County, Leeds, Legacy Prep, Midfield, Mountain Brook, and Tarrant schools. More than 100 people attended.

**School Mental Health Coordinators:** Children's Behavioral Health Senior Executive Leader Stacy White; PIRC Director Cindy Jones; PIRC Advisory Committee members and Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB) Senior Vice President of Programs Gus Heard-Hughes and CFGB Mental Health Initiative Director Robin Sparks had a video conference with 22 School-Based Mental Health Coordinators, representing Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties. White, Jones, Heard-Hughes, and Sparks listened and discussed the coordinators' needs and provided education, resources, and support.

**Conecuh County Mental Health Fun Fair:** School-Based Mental Health Coordinator D'Atra Howard organized the first annual mental health fair for students in 3rd-12th grade. The event held at Hill Crest High School provided education, resources, and activities on children's mental health, including PIRC information to the fair's participants.

**Birmingham City Schools:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones attended Birmingham City Schools' inaugural Community Teen Summit: Suicide Prevention at Woodlawn High School. More than 75 teens, parents, and school personnel attended. Jones was interviewed at the event by ABC 33/40 on how important it is to talk about suicide prevention in schools and the community.

# PIRC Community Outreach



*PIRC Therapist Matt Foster provided PIRC information at Chilton County High School's back-to-school event.*



*PIRC Director Cindy Jones participated in Bessemer City Schools' "Let's Talk About It! Mental Health Matters" Fair. Jones, right, is pictured with District Social Worker Shunta Love showing support for the Bessemer City Middle School Tigers' students.*

## Schools (cont.)

**Altamont School:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones exhibited at Birmingham's Altamont School's Teen Mental Health Fair. More than 100 students, parents, school personnel, and exhibitors attended the event.

**Bessemer City Schools:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones participated in Bessemer City Schools' "Let's Talk About It! Mental Health Matters" Fair. Jones talked to 100 students, parents, school personnel, and community partners who attended the event. The school system of five elementary, one middle, and one high school has more than 3,500 students.

**Central Alabama Wellness Mental Health Center #Be Well Chilton:** PIRC Therapist Matt Foster provided PIRC information at the back-to-school event held at Chilton County High School. The event prepared 200 parents and students for their return to school with free supplies and community resources.

**Just Be Well Pickens County:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones and Children's Patient Health and Education Department employees took part in the community school event. They provided information to 250 families and students on both departments and car seats to those with small children.

**2022 Early Childhood Education Conference:** Alabama Department of Mental Health's Director of the Office of Infant and Early Childhood Special Programs Jane Duer attended the conference on improving education and intervention of preschool-aged children. She provided PIRC information to the more than 150 in attendance. The conference is a collaborative effort between multiple state and local agencies, service providers, parents, and includes a broad range of professionals.

# PIRC Community Outreach



*City of Center Point Public Safety Director Antonio Weatherly organized a National Night Out event honoring Jefferson County Sheriff's and Center Point Police and promoting law enforcement and community partnerships like the PIRC.*



*The Birmingham Vipers Girls' Softball team, pictured with a tournament trophy, was sponsored by the PIRC to promote children's mental health awareness and support statewide.*

## Community Events

**Jefferson County Sheriff's and the City of Center Point:** Public Safety Director Antonio Weatherly organized a National Night Out event honoring Jefferson County Sheriff's and Center Point Police and promoting law enforcement and community partnerships. Weatherly educated the more than 200 people about PIRC services.

**Shelby County Sheriff Department's Crisis Response Training:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones presented on PIRC services at the department's yearly crisis response training. More than 30 officers and law enforcement agents attended.

**Birmingham Vipers Girls' Softball Team:** The team, ages 7-9, was sponsored by the PIRC to promote children's mental health awareness and support. A PIRC banner was hung at each game played three weekends a month, year-round, and statewide.

**Alabama Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of the Darkness Walk:** PIRC Therapist Matt Foster provided information on PIRC services at this annual event where more than 300 people walked to honor victims of suicide and raise awareness about suicide prevention.

# PIRC Community Outreach



Children's Behavioral Health had the most team members with 70 participants at in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walk, winning for the third year in a row.



PIRC Therapist Melissa Edwards attended the Birmingham Special Needs Expo and provided information on PIRC services to more than 150 attendees.

## Community Events (cont.)

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Birmingham Walk:** Children's Behavioral Health Department had the most team members with 70 participants at the walk for the third year in a row. More than 250 people and community supporters walked 1.5-miles in the event, which is a part of National Mental Health Awareness Week in September.

**11th Annual Birmingham Parent Magazine's Special Needs Expo:** PIRC Therapist Melissa Edwards attended the day-long event which helps families learn about products, support groups, recreational activities, healthcare, therapy, and many other services for children and adults with special needs. Edwards provided information on PIRC services to more than 150 attendees from Jefferson, Shelby, and St. Clair counties.

**15th Annual Conference to Improve the Well-Being of Our Children:** PIRC Director Cindy Jones spoke on "Perspectives on Children's Mental Health" at the conference in Tuscaloosa. More than 360 educators, counselors, social workers, medical professionals, college and university staff, law enforcement, business and civic leaders, and parents attended the event.

**R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Back-to-School Rally:** More Than Conquerors Faith Church sponsors a yearly back-to-school rally where students and families from the Birmingham area receive important information and resources for the new school year. PIRC Director Cindy Jones gave out PIRC information to more than 250 cars who took part in the drive through event.

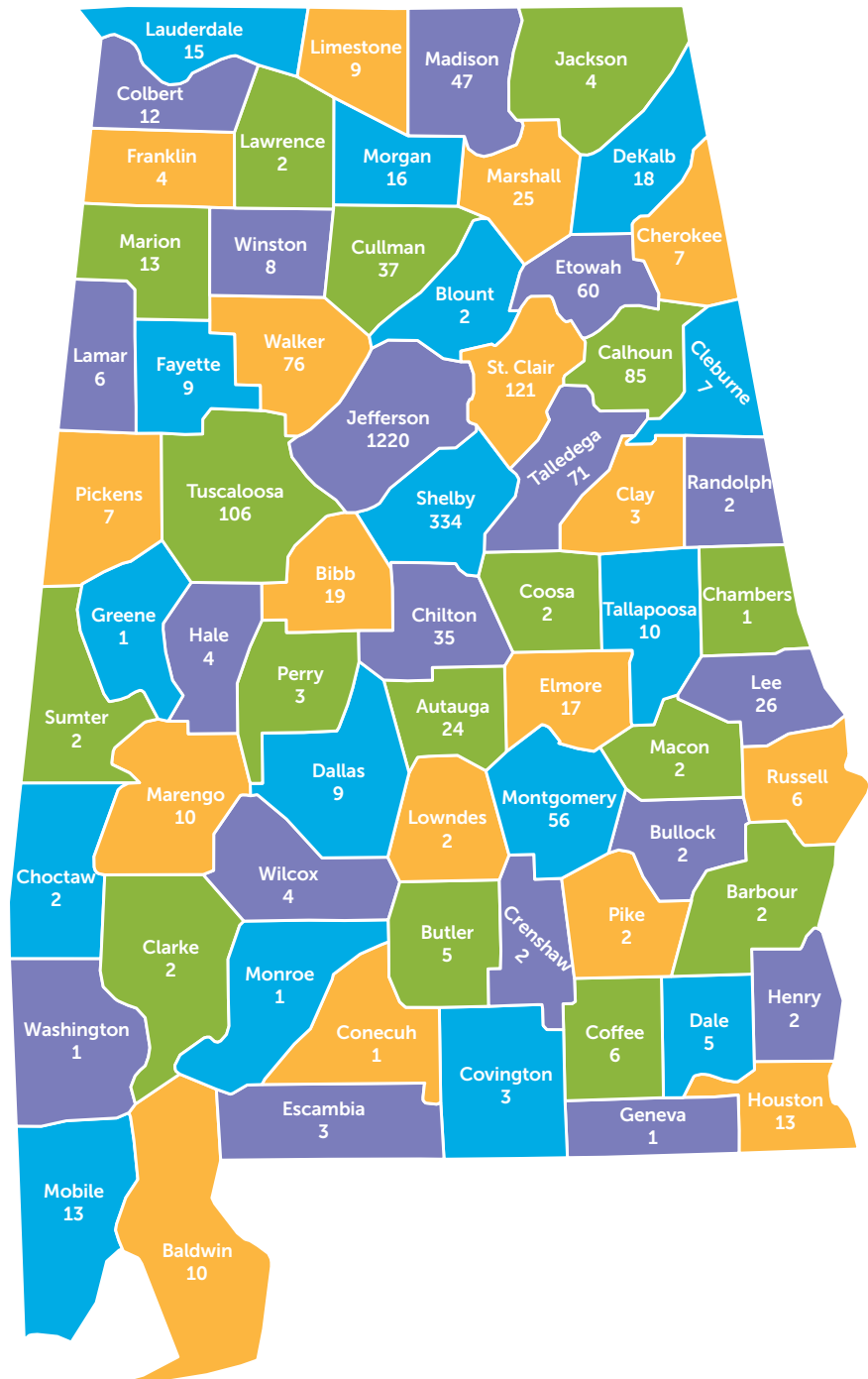
# PIRC Statistics

## PIRC Callers by County\*

TOTAL:  
**2,998**

\* 297 callers were not identified by county.

\* 17 calls were out of state.

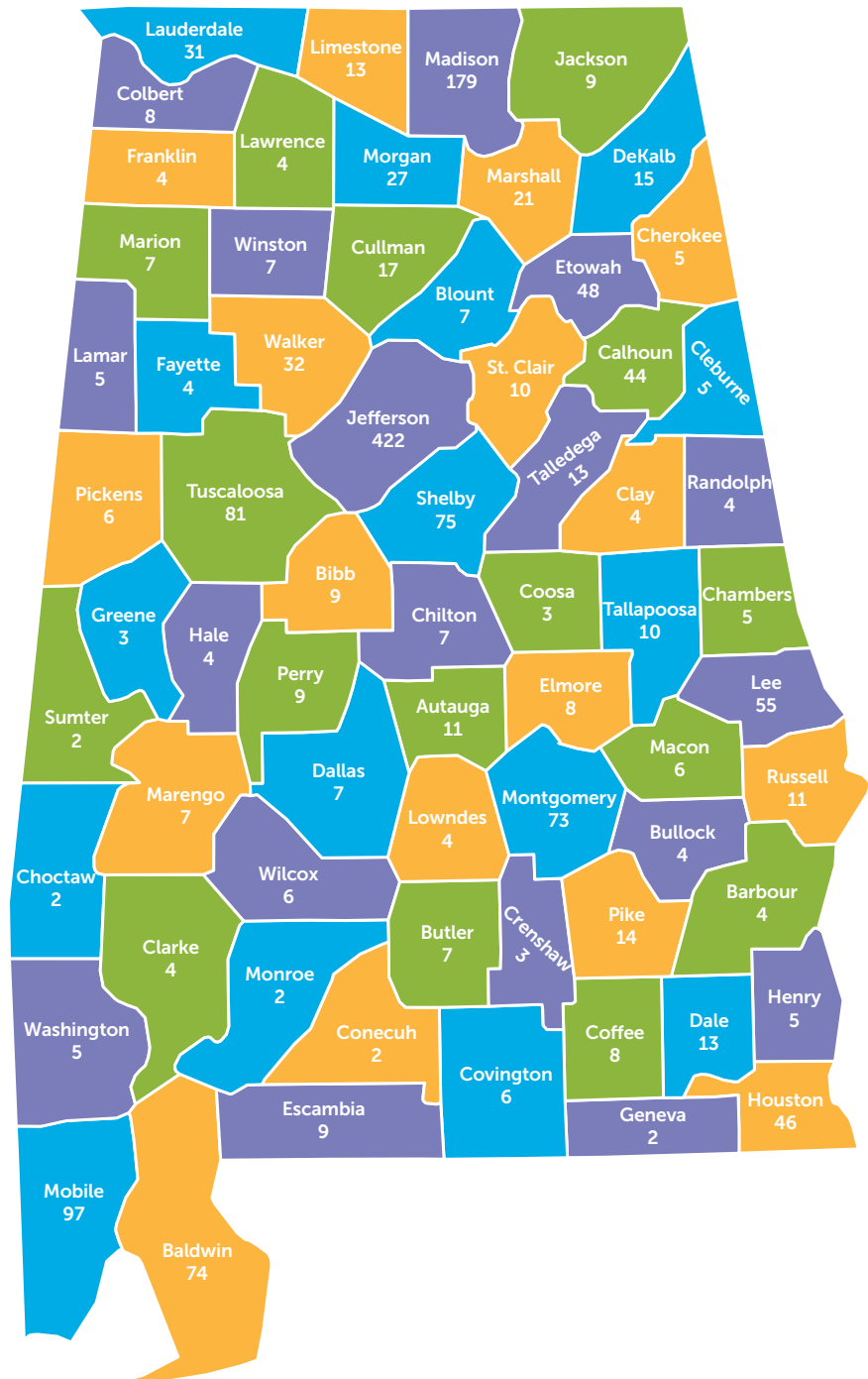


# PIRC Statistics

## PIRC-Identified Mental Health Providers by County\*

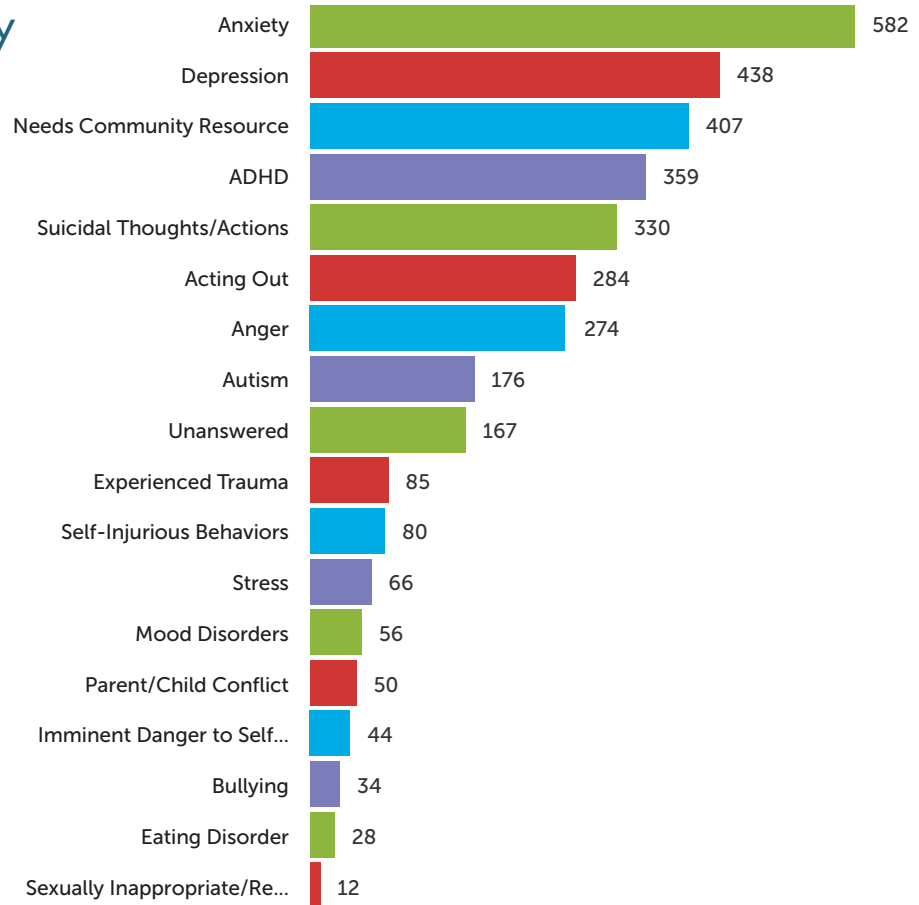
**TOTAL:  
1,702**

\* 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 providers as one listing. In addition, there are 41 out-of-state providers in the database.

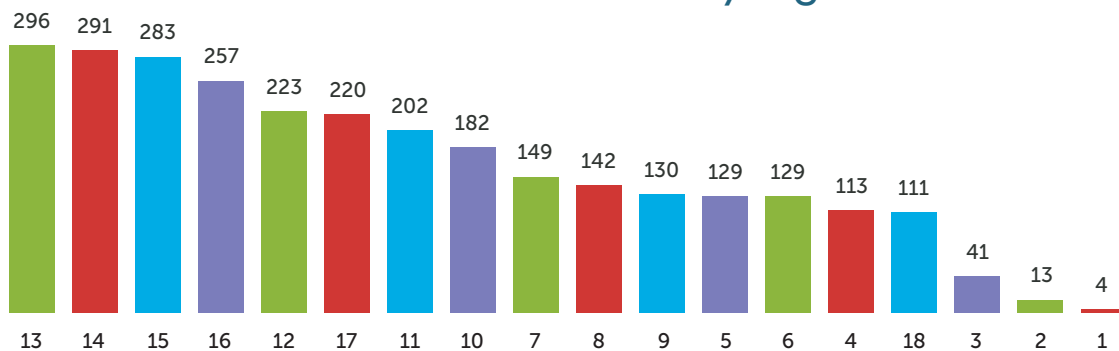


# PIRC Statistics

## Caller's Primary Concern



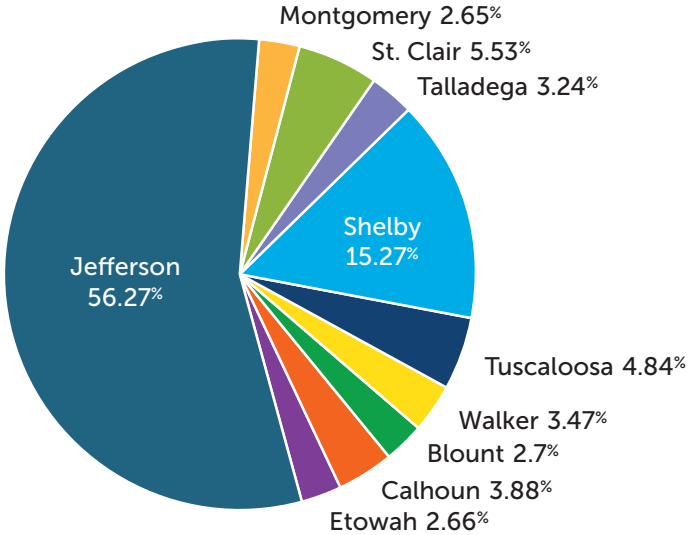
## Caller's Concerns by Ages



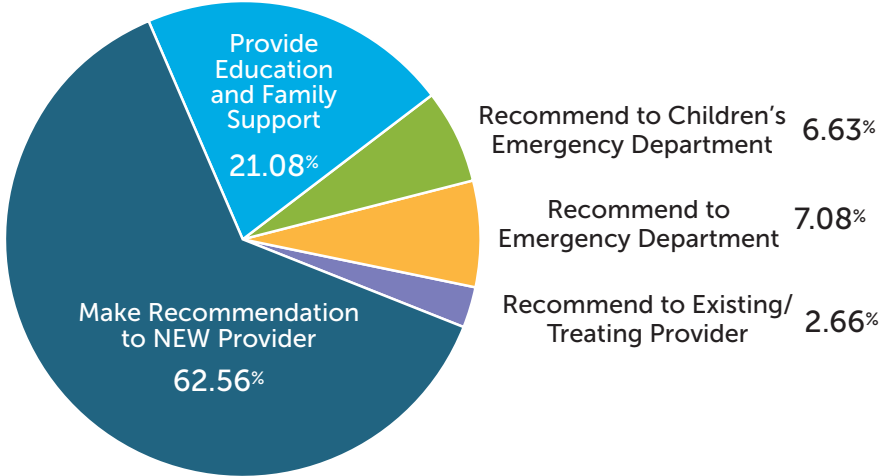


# PIRC Statistics

## Top 10 Counties by Caller

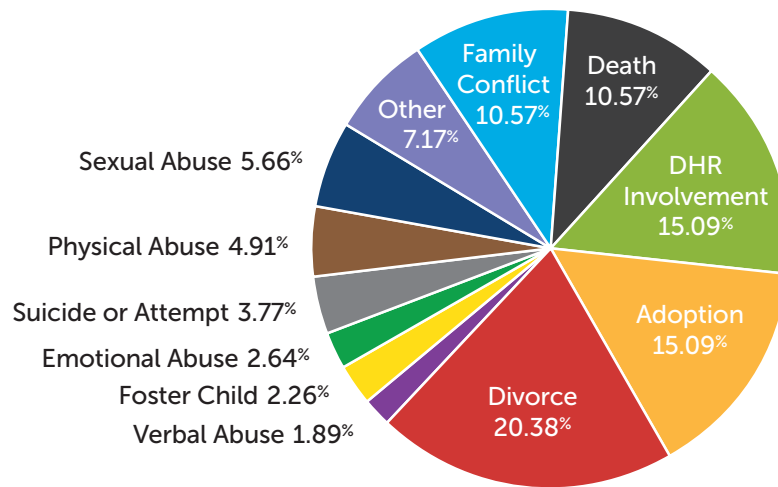


## Caller's Disposition Profile

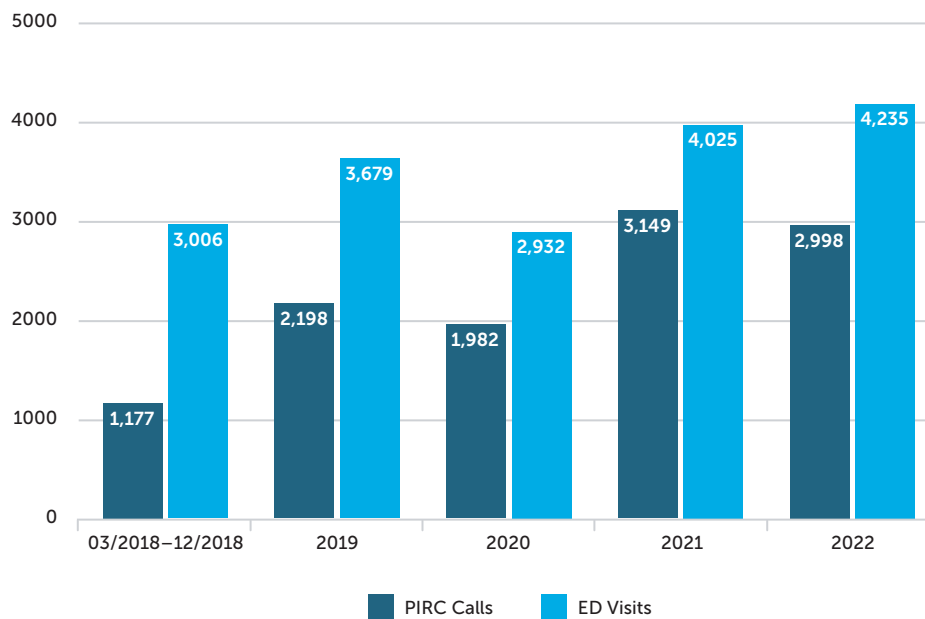


# PIRC Statistics

## Caller's Psychosocial Indicators



## PIRC Growth Since 2018



# PIRC Future Plans



*Children's Behavioral Health Department plans to continue expanding services to increase access and advocate statewide for children's mental health needs. Pictured here are members of the inpatient, outpatient, and ED teams ready to serve Alabama communities.*



*PIRC Director Cindy Jones took part in the United Way Woman United panel discussion on mental health challenges facing children and teens. Pictured left to right: Crisis Center Youth Services Coordinator Tashee Brown, United Way Director of Agency Relations & Allocations Shakeitha Tatum, Alabama State Department of Education Office of School Improvement Coordinator Dr. Melissa Shields, PIRC Director Cindy Jones, and Fairfield City Schools' Mental Health Coordinator Emily Herring.*

Children's of Alabama is important to children's mental health. Every day the PIRC team is answering phone calls, listening to parent's concerns, and communicating the right steps to take or evaluating a child in the ED, who is in crisis, and making the best recommendations for care. It is vital and often lifesaving care provided to communities statewide. The PIRC will continue its mission to promote positive mental health, provide the right resource to those seeking help, offer expert care, maintain and garner new community partners, and through advocacy destigmatize children's mental health.

The PIRC is able to provide 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.

## 2023 Goals

- Improve patient and family care and satisfaction in the ED's new 16-bed behavioral health expansion.
- Focus PIRC database listings on updating and adding Regional Autism Network (RAN) resources, psychology and Medicaid providers, and identify race and ethnicity of providers.
- Target outreach to physicians, schools, and mental health providers through conference exhibition and participation.
- Continue partnering with PATHS Tele-Mental Health program to support urban and rural pediatricians and their patients and families by identifying local mental health resources.
- Identify new partnerships with community stakeholders.



Psychiatric Intake Response Center  
Children's of Alabama Emergency Department  
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[ChildrensAL.org/PIRC](https://www.childrensal.org/PIRC)