

**Written Comments to the OECD Health Committee**

July 2026

Item 15. Enhancing adolescent social and emotional well-being

DELSA/HEA(2026)11

General Comments

Business at OECD supports the OECD's emphasis on coordinated support for adolescent social and emotional well-being in home, in schools, in communities and online. We recommend highlighting and supporting approaches that strengthen early identification, improve access to evidence-based care, strengthen care navigation and health literacy, and guide safe use of digital and AI tools with clinical escalation pathways.

We recommend that the OECD:

- Assess the current landscape of coordinated ecosystems that connect families, schools and communities and health services together, identifying gaps and barriers to access. Adolescents frequently seek support through peers, digital channels and community networks before engaging with formal care systems. Multiple trusted intervention pathways and support entry points need to exist for young people rather than relying on single-entry point clinical referral alone. The OECD should emphasise the importance of early intervention support and easier access to behavioural health services as key components to supporting youth wellbeing.
- Add a balanced discussion of appropriate digital tools and their use. Young people are already using AI-based support, making safeguards, literacy, escalation pathways and access to qualified care essential. According to the latest findings in the United Healthcare's fourth annual Young Adult & College Student Behavioral Health Report¹, 31% of young adults in the US aged 18-28 reported that they or a friend/roommate used AI-based platforms for symptom exploration, information

¹ <https://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/newsroom/2026/2026-04-28-survey-finds-widespread-mental-behavioral-health-challenges-among-young-adults-college-students.html>.

gathering or coping strategies in the past year, and that 26% of users turned to AI platforms for companionship, reassurance and/or emotional support. The OECD should support the use of credible digital information, coaching and navigation resources while recognizing that these tools are not substitutes for clinical care when needed.

- Other insights from the UnitedHealthcare 2026 Young Adult and College Student Behavioral Health ReportBased on 2,031 respondents, the report found that 62% reported a mental or behavioural-health concern affecting themselves or a friend or roommate in the previous year
- Cost and appointment availability are barriers to care access.
- 69% of college students self-reported a mental or behavioural-health concern in the previous year compared with 43% of parents reporting what they believed students experienced. This parent-perception gap is the highest it has been in four years and highlights the importance of communication and access to early identification pathways.

Example of industry action

- North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program. UnitedHealthcare and the United Health Foundation provided a \$3.2 million grant supporting expansion of NC-STeP. As of September 2025, more than 40,000 children and adolescents had been screened for mental-health concerns, more than 640 received integrated behavioural and primary care services, and parent/guardian satisfaction was reported at 92%. This demonstrates the value of integrating behavioural health into primary-care settings.