

Psychiatrist Ashley Weiss testifies before Senate subcommittee on youth mental health

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Dr. Ashley Weiss recently testified in front of a Senate subcommittee to share her expertise on youth mental health. The panel included Sharon Hoover, PhD, of the University of Maryland, Curtis Wright of Xavier University of Louisiana, and Brooklyn Williams, a high school student. (Photo provided)

A psychotic episode can be the first symptom of a serious mental health problem, but the time between that first episode and when a patient finally gets care is often more than a year. Successful treatment can put a young person back on the path to a full life. Without care, the consequences to someone's mental and physical health can be devastating.

[Ashley Weiss, DO, MPH](#), assistant professor of psychiatry at Tulane University School of Medicine, testified at a Senate subcommittee hearing on youth mental health

earlier this month. Weiss founded the [Early Psychosis Intervention Clinic - New Orleans \(EPIC-NOLA\)](#) in 2015 and has treated nearly 1,000 young patients in the years since. The clinic offers a multidisciplinary and individualized approach to care for patients ages 12 to 35.

Senator Bill Cassidy invited Weiss to speak at the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families. Weiss told lawmakers that 3 in 10 people will experience a psychotic episode such as hallucinations or delusions in their lifetimes, often between the ages of 16 and 25. Early treatment is vital, said Weiss. People with psychosis are more at risk of self-harm and suicide.

“There is a sense of urgency, because time is not on our side,” Weiss told the committee.

Cassidy is a co-sponsor of [the Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower \(RISE\) Act](#), which aims to help ease the transition from high school to college for students with disabilities. The bipartisan committee also discussed ways to better fund mental health care.

[Watch the full hearing here](#). Weiss’ testimony begins at 29:58.