

Editor's Notes

Now More Than Ever

David C. Saunders, M.D., Ph.D.^{1,2} 

¹ Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, New York State Psychiatric Institute, ² Division of Psychiatry, Columbia University Irving Medical Center
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The academic and the political seem inseparable these days. Around this time last year, I introduced an issue of *JAACAP Connect* by reflecting on Donald Trump's second inauguration. I highlighted articles that addressed populations and programs most likely to be adversely impacted by his policies, including minoritized children and adolescents, and school-based mental health programs that rely on federal funding. One year later, politics are as relevant as ever in child and adolescent mental health.

The US Supreme Court is presently deliberating the legality of transgender athlete bans, which experts anticipate the conservative court to uphold.¹ In the current *JAACAP Connect* issue, Versel and colleagues discuss gender-affirming care (GAC) for children and adolescents in the United States, including challenges that the current political climate poses for transgender and gender-diverse youth.² They call for health care professionals to actively support and advocate for the integration of GAC into medical education and practice to ensure it remains accessible to future generations.

Additionally, Donald Trump's call for deregulation of artificial intelligence (AI) platforms may impact youth well-being, especially children and adolescents who interact with large language models (eg, ChatGPT) for mental health guidance.³ The tragic February 2024 death of 14-year-old Sewell Setzer III, whose interactions with an AI chatbot were implicated in his suicide, highlights the importance of safeguards to protect youth. Just this month, Google and Character.AI agreed to settle a lawsuit filed by families, including Setzer's, who accused AI chatbots of harming minors.⁴

Three articles in this issue address the use of AI by minors. Bala and colleagues explore the impact of digital platforms, including AI-driven chatbots, on adolescent mental health. They argue for ethical AI design and stronger regu-

lation to protect vulnerable users.⁵ Likewise, Ng discusses the known risks (machine learning algorithms), emerging risks (generative AI), and future risks (agentic AI) of AI for youth mental health, arguing that new psychiatric diagnostic and treatment frameworks may be necessary.⁶ On the other hand, Ali and Shaligram discuss how AI and psychiatric genomics are reshaping child psychiatry for the better by enabling earlier, personalized interventions, although the authors are careful to note that attention to ethics, equity, and the broader sociocultural context is paramount.⁷

Furthermore, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are occupying the streets of Minneapolis (among other cities) to detain undocumented immigrants for deportation, including children and adolescents. Often resulting in caregiver separation, deportation efforts have significant consequences for youth, a subject on which we have published previously.⁸

Like it or not, our work is not apolitical. This is nothing new, as advocating for children's mental health has always included engaging with the political process. But it is more important now than ever, and we must do our part to protect the well-being of our youth despite the political challenges that loom.

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