Study finds 84% of Israeli kids, 40% of parents suffering emotional distress over war

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A study conducted by Goshen, an organization promoting community child health and wellbeing, as well as the Israeli Pediatric Association, indicates that 84% of Israeli children overall are suffering from emotional distress. Forty percent of parents are also feeling stressed and anxious, but only 14% of parents have sought help for their or their children’s mental health.

The two organizations conducted the survey a month into the war to assess the extent to which the mental health of children and their parents has been affected by the Hamas massacres of October 7 and the ensuing war. The survey’s results are also meant to help map out how to best address families’ needs for mental health support.

The survey included a representative group of 493 parents of children from birth to age 12 from around the country.

The results show that 93% of children personally impacted by the October 7 Hamas attacks and the war are having emotional difficulties, with 69% of them suffering from anxiety. Ninety percent of children living in areas with many rocket sirens going off are distressed, with 69% of them specifically feeling anxious. Children living in areas with less frequent sirens experienced less anxiety.

Despite such high percentages of children and parents feeling that their emotional wellbeing has been negatively affected by the war, only 14% of parents have sought mental health first aid for themselves or for their children.

Twenty-one percent of the children whose parents participated in the study saw their pediatrician during the first month of the war for checkups, seasonal illnesses and injuries. Half of their parents expected the doctor to inquire about the child’s emotional state, and a quarter expected the doctor to provide them with guidance for supporting their child in this difficult time.

The experts who conducted the survey say its results point to the importance of training pediatricians to better identify and address issues related to children’s mental health.