Mental Health.gov

Let's talk about it.

For Educators

Educators are often the first to notice mental health problems. Here are some ways you can help students and their families.

What Educators Should Know

You should know:

- The warning signs for mental health problems.
- Whom to turn to, such as the principal, school nurse, school psychiatrist or psychologist, or school social worker, if you have questions or concerns about a student's behavior.
- How to access crisis support and other mental health services.

What Educators Should Look For in Student Behavior

Consult with a school counselor, nurse, or administrator and the student's parents if you observe one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Seriously trying to harm oneself, or making plans to do so
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Involvement in many fights or desire to badly hurt others
- Severe out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make oneself lose weight
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still that puts the student in physical danger or causes problems in the classroom
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Drastic changes in the student's behavior or personality

What Educators Can Do in Classrooms and Schools

You can support the mental health of all students in your classroom and school, not just individual students who may exhibit behavioral issues. Consider the following actions:

- Educate staff, parents, and students on symptoms of and help for mental health problems
- Promote social and emotional competency and build resilience
- Help ensure a positive, safe school environment
- Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision-making
- Encourage helping others
- Encourage good physical health
- Help ensure access to school-based mental health supports

Developing Effective School Mental Health Programs

Efforts to care for the emotional wellbeing of children and youth can extend beyond the classroom and into the entire school. School-based mental health programs can focus on promoting mental wellness, preventing mental health problems, and providing treatment.

Effective programs:

- Promote the healthy social and emotional development of all children and youth
- Recognize when young people are at risk for or are experiencing mental health problems
- Identify how to intervene early and appropriately when there are problems

Learn More about Ways to Support Your Students and Their Families

- Find how to assess mental health needs in your school and [develop and implement a school-based mental health program](#) 🔗.
- Find [tips for talking to children and youth after a disaster or traumatic event](#) (PDF – 796 KB).
- Registered [National Association of School Nurses](#) 🔗 can learn about their role in [providing behavioral health services in schools](#) 🔗 through an online continuing education program.

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1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Veterans
Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255
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