Dear School Champion:

Thank you for joining the Children’s Mental Health Matters! Campaign as a School Champion and pledging your school’s commitment to raising awareness of children’s mental health! As a School Champion, you are responsible for organizing at least one awareness raising or educational event for your school during or around Awareness Week, May 3 - 9, 2020.

Within this packet you will find many resources, including ideas and templates for activities, to use during Awareness Week.

- Take Home Sheet for Parents - Fast Facts About Children’s Mental Health (p. 1)
- Awareness Flyer for School Staff (p. 2)
- Essay Contest (p. 3)
- Morning Announcements (p. 4)
- Phone Message (p. 8)
- Social Media Posts (p. 9)

For more information and resources please visit the campaign website www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for additional ideas and activities for you to use in your schools. In the months leading up to Awareness Week, we will routinely email you new resources and ideas to add or use in your planning.

Participate in the 2020 School Champion of the Year contest by submitting photos and/or stories of your school’s awareness activities. The winners will receive recognition on our website and social media, as well as a certificate honoring your efforts. All submissions must be received by May 22, 2020.

Also, if you have community events scheduled, email us the details so that they can be added to our website event calendar. When you post your stories and photos on social media, use the hashtag #CMHMMaryland so that your activities can be shared.

Please send your contest submissions or questions to Tiffany Thomas at TThomas@mhamd.org

With appreciation,

Kari Gorkos
Tiffany Thomas
MHAMD

Gail Doerr
MCF

Dr. Nancy Lever, PhD
NCSMH
Attention - Parents & Families:
Help our School be a
Children’s Mental Health Matters! School Champion!

Thursday May 7, 2020
is Children’s Mental Health Matters! Green Day
Encourage your child to wear something green to raise awareness of the importance of children’s mental health.

Fast Facts about Children’s Mental Health:

• Mental health impacts:
  ▪ How we feel about ourselves
  ▪ How we relate to others
  ▪ How we handle new, stressful, and challenging situations

• One of every five children experience a mental emotional or behavioral health problem before age 18.

• Up to 70% of school-aged children with a diagnosable mental illness do not receive treatment.

• Early intervention is the best way to prevent long-term or severe conditions into adulthood.

• Mental health is something everyone has, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, income, or education. Mental health awareness helps all children have opportunities to be successful in school, at home, in the community, and in their future adult lives.

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is a great time to learn ways to support children’s mental health and how to recognize signs of mental health problems.

Learn more about the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and find resources, including our Family Resource Kit, at www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Be a Children’s Mental Health Matters! School Champion and help raise awareness in your school!
Attention - Teachers & Staff:
Thursday May 7, 2020 is Children’s Mental Health Matters! Green Day

Encourage your fellow staff and students to wear something green to raise awareness of the importance of children’s mental health.

Fast Facts about Children’s Mental Health:

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  o How we feel about ourselves
  o How we relate to others
  o How we handle new, stressful, and challenging situations

• One of every five children experience a mental emotional or behavioral health problem before age 18.

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Be a Children’s Mental Health Matters! School Champion and help raise awareness in your school!
Children’s Mental Health Matters! Essay Contest

Instructions: Write an essay on one of the following topics or choose your own topic about mental health. Use the space below or type/write your response on a separate sheet of paper. Winning essays will be displayed around the school.

Possible Topics:

- What does mental health mean to you?
- How can students and adults in schools work together to improve mental health?
- What positive strategies, activities, people, or outlooks on your life help you deal with stress?
- Write about a famous person who has shared openly about their mental health problems and how it has impacted you.
Announcement Scripts
Children’s Mental Health Matters! Awareness Week

During the announcements, students or staff can share tips or facts with their peers to increase awareness of and reduce stigma around children's mental health. Example scripts are listed below and can be modified to meet your needs. Additional suggestions specific to elementary and middle/high school students are also included beginning on page 7.

First Day Introduction: May 3 - 9 is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in Maryland. This week, we will be talking about the importance of being healthy not just in our bodies, but in our minds. This means doing things to help ourselves and others feel better when we are feeling scared, angry, sad, embarrassed, or stressed. Each day this week on the announcements, we will learn a 'Coping Skill of the Day.' Teachers, please encourage your students to practice these in class together.

Monday: Today's coping skill of the day is **reading**. Reading is a great way to learn about new things and is also a way to take your mind off other things. Sometimes when people are upset, it can be helpful to read a book by a favorite author or about a favorite topic to boost your mood. Think about what type of book would be best for you to read when you are upset. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Tuesday: Today's coping skill of the day is **listening to music that makes you feel better**. Some people listen to music to distract themselves from their bad mood. Some people listen to music that helps them feel understood and less alone. Music can change the way you’re feeling and help you look on the bright side. The most important thing is that the music or song you choose makes you feel better. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS! (Consider sharing 30 seconds or less of a song as part of this announcement)

Wednesday: Today’s coping skill of the day is **writing**. Many of us have a tough time talking about our hard feelings and thoughts. Writing helps you express those difficult feelings that you cannot find the words to say. Take a few minutes and write down what you are thinking or how you are feeling, and find a supportive adult to share your feelings with. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Thursday: Today’s coping skill of the day is **taking a break**. Moving away from what is upsetting you or closing your eyes at your desk for a few minutes can help you feel calmer and more in control. Taking a break removes you from people or events that may be upsetting you. During your peaceful break, take deep breaths to help calm your mind and body down so you can be ready to return to your day. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Friday: Today’s coping skill of the day is **talking to someone who cares about you**. Talking to someone who cares about you helps you feel understood and supported. Think of people you can talk to at home, at school, and in the neighborhood. Don’t keep it to yourself when you are feeling scared, angry, sad, embarrassed, or stressed. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!
Any Day: Did you know that students who are feeling stressed, sad, or even thinking about suicide are very likely to tell a friend or teacher? If someone shares with you that they are very sad, having a hard time and/or feel like they want to die, the most important thing you can do is take their feelings seriously, listen without judgment, and help them get to a trusted adult for more support. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

*The above suggestions were compiled by clinician Jennifer Lease, LCSW-C with the University of Maryland School Mental Health Program.

The following suggestions can be used in addition or in place of the ones above include:
General School Audience Suggestions:

Today’s coping skill of the day is talking to a trusted friend. Sometimes you just need to be heard. Having a friend that listens without judging can really help when you are feeling worried, overwhelmed or depressed. Research shows that social support is one of our best buffers against stress, and positive friendships are really important for our overall well-being. Friends are like life jackets, sometimes you need them, and sometimes it’s good just knowing they are there. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is exercising. Going for a walk, a quick stretch, or even dancing can help relieve stress. When faced with mental or emotional challenges in life, exercise is a healthy coping strategy. Take 10 minutes a day to do some sort of physical activity and work up a sweat. Your body and mind will thank you for it. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is guided imagery, or imagining a happy place in your mind. Think of a place where you would feel calm and happy, it can be a place you’ve been or a place you would like to go. Close your eyes and imagine that you are there. Think about what you see, what you hear, what you smell, and who is with you. If it helps, you can draw your happy place to help you imagine it. Imagining a happy place helps you feel better when you cannot change your surroundings. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is problem solving. The next time you have a problem, come up with a few solutions of how you could solve the problem and then take the time to list out the pluses, what is good about the choice, and the minuses, what could be bad about the choice, for each of the solutions. Use the list to help you make a decision that is best for you. If you need help, find an adult you trust to go over your list with! REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is journaling. Keeping a special journal or a diary in which you can write out your thoughts and feelings can be helpful. Some people like to journal on their own, while others like to put their thoughts on paper and then share it with others such as friends, teachers, or a counselor. Think about starting a journal for writing down your own thoughts and feelings. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!
Today’s coping skill of the day is **coloring**. Coloring is not just for little kids – it is great for people of all ages. Coloring takes your mind off of difficult things and allows you to focus on a fun, peaceful task. Look online for printable coloring pages for some inspiration, or just grab a piece of paper and any crayon, marker, colored pencil or pen and get drawing! REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is **baking**. Working together with your friends or family to bake a delicious treat is a great way to be creative and help others feel happy while also boosting your own mood. When you focus and follow a recipe, you are clearing your mind of other stressors and focused on the present moment. It is great to feel accomplished after baking something special – and yummy too! Remember to ask a trusted adult to help you with this skill. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is **taking deep breaths**. Breathe in through your nose for 3 seconds, hold the breath for 3 seconds, and breathe out for 3 seconds. Do this 5 times or until you start to feel better. You can think of your favorite color or a peaceful word when you’re breathing to keep your mind focused. Breathing deeply helps calm your body down and gives you time to figure out how to react to what is going on around you. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

Today’s coping skill of the day is **writing poetry**. Poetry is a great way to express your thoughts and feelings in a creative way. The next time you are have a feeling you want to express, take a moment and try writing a poem. Many people find that writing poetry helps them to cope with feelings they are experiencing. Once your poem is written, you can keep it for yourself, or share it with your family, friends, or teachers. REMEMBER, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

**Elementary School Suggestions:**

Today’s coping skill of the day is called **pizza breathing**. Taking deep breaths helps us calm ourselves down when we feel uncomfortable emotions. We have to practice often and when we’re not upset for this skill to work!. Close your eyes. Imagine that your teacher ordered your favorite kind of pizza, just for you! You open the box and immediately smell the buttery, cheesy goodness of your pizza. You want to eat the pizza, but it is still very warm. Take a deep breath through your nose, smelling all the pizza goodness! Now, slowly blow out your breath through your mouth to cool off your slice of pizza. Let’s do it again. Breathe in and smell your pizza. Breathe out and cool it off. Next time you’re upset, or see a friend who is upset, encourage them to use pizza breathing to help calm down!

Today’s coping skill of the day is **muscle relaxation**. When we feel uncomfortable emotions, like anger or worry, sometimes our bodies feel very tense and uncomfortable. Making sure we remind ourselves to relax can help us feel better when we are sad, mad, or worried. Let’s practice! Pretend that you have two lemons and you want to squeeze the juice out to make lemonade. Squeeze your fists together, and squeeze out all the juice from your lemons. Keep squeezing! Notice how your hand feels when you squeeze the lemon. Now that the juice is all gone, drop the lemon and relax your hand. Notice how much better your hands feel when they are relaxed? Try it again!
Today’s coping skill of the day is saying **nice things to ourselves.** Sometimes when we are upset or frustrated, we may say mean things to ourselves in our head, like “I never do things right,” or “I always make my teacher mad!” These thoughts can make us feel even worse! Today, we encourage you to say nice things to yourself in your head, such as “I got this!” “I am trying really hard today.” or “I like myself!” Notice when you are being mean to yourself or when others are being mean to themselves and encourage them to practice saying nice things.

**Middle/High School Suggestions:**
Today’s coping skill is **mindful eating.** Mindful eating helps you slow down and focus your attention on what you’re in the moment. You might even notice new things about the food you’re eating! The next time you eat a snack or meal, take a moment to really slow down and enjoy your food. Close your eyes and take time to notice all the sensations you experience while eating – how your food looks, smells, tastes, and feels in your mouth. Focusing on what you’re experiencing in the moment is a skill that can help increase your awareness of physical sensations in your body.

Today’s coping skill of the day is **progressive muscle relaxation.** Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique used by professional athletes before games and is a great way to quickly relax your body and your mind. The next time you are stressed out or even if you are in a great mood, take a moment and try tensing and then releasing the muscles in your hands and feet twice. For your hands, clench your fingers into fists and hold your muscles taught for about 20 seconds straight, then release all of the tension at once for about 10 seconds. Then, repeat the tensing of your hands once more. For your feet, tighten up your toes as if you are digging them into the ground to keep your balance for about 20 seconds straight, and then release all of the tension in both or your feet for about 10 seconds. Again, repeat this tensing of your feet once more. Notice how relaxed your hands and feet feel after you tense and release the muscles in them.

Today’s coping skill of the day is **positive self-talk.** Saying or thinking kind things about yourself is a great way to improve your mood and also a good way to replace bad thoughts you have about yourself. The next time you notice you put yourself down, or even if you are not having negative self-thoughts, take a moment and try telling yourself something you do well or like about yourself. Many students find that doing this helps them to feel more positively about themselves and cope with negative thoughts and feelings they are experiencing.

Today’s coping skill of the day is **being kind to others.** Saying or thinking kind things about others is a great way to improve your own mood and also a good way to make your relationships with people you care about even better. The next time you notice you see a friend or someone you like, take a moment and try telling them something you think they do well or like about them. You can also do this on social media, like snap chat or Twitter. Do your best to say something nice to them without laughing - be sincere!. Many students find that even though it can feel awkward at first, complimenting others helps them to feel more positively about themselves and people with whom they are close.
Sample Automated Phone Message to Parents

Dear (insert name of school) families,

May 3rd - 9th is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in Maryland. Mental health refers to a person’s overall behavioral, social, emotional and psychological well-being. Mental health impacts how we think, feel, and act, including how a child feels about himself/herself, relates to other children and adults, and handles change, stress and other life situations. One in five children experience a mental, emotional or behavioral health problem before age 18. These problems affect children of all demographic groups, regardless of education, income, race or culture.

This week students will be learning things to help themselves and others feel better when they are sad, worried, angry, or scared. To learn more about the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and resources for help, contact (name of your School Champion Coordinator, counselor or other contact in school), your pediatrician, or go to www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org.
Social Media Posts

All Champions {students, parents, school staff, mental health clinicians, community members} can spread the word about Children’s Mental Health Matters! Awareness week. Update your social media status or share these data points with your distribution lists of child, youth, and family-serving organizations, associations, agencies, and individuals and encouraging other to share with their contacts.

A first step is to follow the Campaign on Social Media!

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChildrensMentalHealthMatters
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/childrensmentalhealthmatters/
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/ChildrensMHM

You can use these messages and/or graphics as stand-alone e-mail messages, a component of your signature block, or to post on your school’s website, blog, social media, and other means of communicating with colleagues and families.

Visit https://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/resources/2020-champion-materials/ to download this and additional graphics for your use.

2020 Social Media Posts

Below are suggested posts for Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week in Maryland, May 3rd - 9th, 2020.

5/3/2020
Mental health is physical health! A mental check-up is just as important as a routine physical. Visit for more information: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is May 3-9, 2020 in Maryland. Visit for more information. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Twitter:
It is Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week in Maryland – spread the word! www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

Have you heard? Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is May 3-9, 2020 in Maryland. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

5/4/2020
Do you know what the most common types of bullying are? Learn more at: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Did you know that 1 in 5 children experience a mental, emotional, or behavioral health problem before the age of 18? Learn more at: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Twitter:
One in five students’ 12-18 report being bullied during the school year. Learn more at: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

1 in 5 children experience a mental, emotional or behavioral health problem before 18. Learn more www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org
2020 Social Media Posts

5/5/2020
Can you recognize signs and symptoms of trauma in children? Some signs include: nightmares, body aches, and having trouble at school. Find more facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Can you name 3 ways to help build resilience in a child? Some ways: listen, spend positive time, promote play, encourage a good night’s sleep, be consistent with rules and routines, foster mutual respect and trust. Find more facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

**Twitter:**
Looking for information on signs of trauma in children? Visit www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

Looking for tips to foster resiliency in your child? Visit www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

5/6/2020
Depression is associated with social, emotional, and cognitive delays. Find more facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth. Suicide is not the solution. Contact the Maryland Crisis Hotline if you need immediate help at 800-422-0009 or call 2-1-1, press 1 www.help4mdyouth.org

Every 13.7 minutes in the US, someone dies by suicide. Suicide is not the solution. Contact the Maryland Crisis Hotline if you need immediate help at 800-422-0009 or call 2-1-1, press 1 www.help4mdyouth.org

**Twitter:**
Did you know depression is associated with social, emotional, and cognitive delays? Find more facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth. Suicide is not the solution. Contact 800-422-0009 or 211, press 1 for immediate help. #CMHMMaryland

Every 13.7 minutes, someone dies by suicide. Suicide is not the solution. Contact 800-422-0009 or 211, press 1 for immediate help. #CMHMMaryland

5/7/2020
Are you not sure who to talk to about your child’s behavior and emotional well-being? Download the Family Resource Kit for information on first steps: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Do you know what mental health services your child’s school offers? For a list of services schools may provide download the Family Resource Kit: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Only 20% of children with mental health disorders are identified and receive mental health services. Download the Family Resource Kit for information on where to get help: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

**Twitter:**
Only 20% of children w/ mental health disorders receive services. Find help: www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org #CMHMMaryland

5/8/2020
Out of 10 million Americans with an eating disorder, 90 percent of them are children and adolescents. Find facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland

Concerned about your children’s mental health? Find facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMaryland
2020 Social Media Posts

5/9/2020
With treatment and support, youth can learn to manage their symptoms of anxiety. Find resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMMaryland

Emotional scars cut just as deep as physical scars. Find help: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Research indicates that early identification and intervention can minimize the long-term impact of mental disorders. Don’t wait, get help today: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Twitter:
Eating disorders typically manifests between 12-13 years of age. Find facts and resources: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org #CMHMMMaryland

Just because you cannot see the wound does not mean it is not there. Find help: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org


Additional Posts:
Have questions about children’s mental health? Get answers: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org


Symptoms of mental health problems often emerge during adolescence. Learn more at www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Bullying during the school years increases thoughts of suicide that may persist into adulthood. Find resources for combatting bullying at school: https://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/educators-providers/educators-resources/

Bullying can be a big mental health problem. For tools to help STOP bullying: www.stopbullying.gov

Depression in teens can mimic what we consider normal adolescent behavior; pay attention. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people. For help, call 800-422-0009, 211, press 1 or go to the nearest ER.

Physical and mental health are strongly linked. For more information on building resilience: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Childhood physical, emotional, and sexual abuse can cause permanent changes to the brain and impact the way a child copes with new stress. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

With help from families, providers, and the community, children can be resilient following trauma. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Positive words from adults are one of the strongest predictors of child resilience following trauma. www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Stigma can prevent children in need from receiving mental health care. For more information, go to www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Nearly 50% of teens try an illegal drug by their senior year. Find tips on substance use prevention: www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

Children’s mental health problems often go undetected. Learn more about signs at www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org