



Students with symptoms of depression exhibit many behaviors that cause significant impairment in social or academic functioning. These symptoms include irritability, diminished interest in daily activities, social withdrawal, physical complaints, and declining school performance. The diagnostic criteria for major depression reflect the developmental differences between adults and children who suffer from the disorder. Educators may notice changes in the students appearance including clothing and hygiene, as well as interaction with other students.

Why is this important?

When compared to their developmental peers, students with depression:

- Are less likely to participate in school activities.
- Are more likely to disrupt classroom activities.
- Are more likely to skip class and miss time away from school.
- Are more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as substance use.
- Are more likely die by suicide.

What can educators do about it?

When a teacher sees any of these signs, it is important to first speak with the child's parents or caregivers. It is important to work in partnership with parents and mental health experts to develop an intervention plan as quickly as possible. When these warning signs occur, a quick response has been found to increase the probability of successful outcomes.

Effective ways of engaging parents include:

- Encouraging them to share their view about their child
- Asking them to express their concerns about their child's academic and behavioral performance
- Asking questions to determine that you have full information
- Discussing with parents the best ways (e.g. phone calls, notes) to communicate with them on a regular basis

Classroom strategies include

- Become a more active observer of student behavior in and around the classroom.
- Consider different factors that may contribute to symptoms of depression. Look at each student on an individual, case-by-case basis.
- Inform caregivers and school clinicians about your observations of the student.
- Help other school staff members learn how to identify the symptoms of depression.
- Teach school staff how to respond to "cries for help" from students with depression.
- Create a feedback loop with caregivers and school clinicians to reassess student symptoms.
- Ask school clinicians to present on different treatment approaches for childhood depression.

Resource Links

National Association of School Psychologists Depression: A Quiet Crisis

<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/families-and-educators/information-for-principals-and-administrators>

Preventing Youth Suicide: Brief Facts and Tips

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/preventing-youth-suicide>

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

Depression: Supporting Students at School

<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/families-and-educators>

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The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Department of Health - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with School and Community Champions across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health. For more information, please visit www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

MHAMD | 443-901-1550 | www.mhamd.org

MCF | 410-730-8267 | www.mdcoalition.org