



Children's
Mental
Health
Matters.org
A MARYLAND PUBLIC
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

2026 Campaign Toolkit

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Welcome to the Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign Digital Toolkit!

The tireless efforts of CMHM Champions have not only raised awareness but have also brought about tangible change in how Maryland communities perceive, address, and support children's mental health issues. Through your advocacy, activity, and outreach, you have broken down barriers, fostered understanding, and provided crucial resources for those in need.

As a Champion for children's mental health, you have embraced the vital significance of prioritizing children's mental wellbeing. Your role as a Champion transcends mere acknowledgment; it embodies a commitment to lead by example and to spearhead initiatives that foster awareness, acceptance, and education on mental health within your school, business, family, or community organization.

While, you are undoubtedly championing children's mental health regularly, you are encouraged to engage in at least one event or activity during key periods such as Awareness Week (May 3rd-9th, 2026) and/or the month of May during Mental Health Awareness Month. These events serve as platforms to amplify the importance of children's mental health, promoting understanding, empathy, and proactive support systems.

To support you on this meaningful journey, we provide a comprehensive toolkit that includes resources, activities, and pre-designed content. This toolkit serves as your compass, guiding you through the intricacies of organizing events, engaging communities, and disseminating crucial information.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Champions for their unwavering commitment to strengthening awareness, advocacy, and support for children and families grappling with mental health challenges. Together, with our gratitude to the [2026 Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign sponsors](#) whose generous support ensures that we can continue to raise awareness and let us continue to champion the cause of children's mental wellbeing, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive emotionally and mentally.



About the Campaign

For over twenty-five years, the Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign has been a cornerstone of Maryland’s collective effort to prioritize and uplift the mental wellbeing of our youth. This longstanding tradition has united school and community organizations annually, forging a powerful coalition dedicated to supporting children’s mental health.

At its core, the campaign embodies a multifaceted approach, aimed at increasing public awareness, dismantling stigma, and fostering vital connections among children, families, educators, and healthcare providers. Through concerted efforts, the campaign endeavors to equip communities with resources for prevention and support, ensuring that no child or family navigates mental health challenges alone.

This commitment to children’s mental health is not confined to a single week in May, but extends throughout the year. However, it peaks during Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week, observed from May 3rd-9th, 2026. During this pivotal period, communities across Maryland unite in solidarity, amplifying the importance of mental wellbeing for our youngest community members.



Increase public acceptance of children’s mental health as important component of child wellbeing

Open up conversations about mental health and substance use and reduce stigma

Strengthen access for children and their families to the resources necessary to prevent and support mental health challenges

Highlight and celebrate innovative efforts of Champions for Children’s Mental Health

Provide opportunity for Campaign Partners and Champions to amplify their voices

Partner Info

Organized by the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), the campaign has received invaluable funding from the [Maryland Department of Health — Behavioral Health Administration](#) throughout its existence. Joining the campaign two years ago, the [Maryland Family Network \(MFN\)](#) brings valuable funding to advance the cause of bringing awareness to children’s mental health, with the goal of promoting protective factors to reduce child abuse and neglect, thanks to their Strong Families Initiative.

Our campaign’s impact is significantly bolstered through our collaboration with our partners. Their outreach efforts amplify the campaign’s reach, making meaningful connections with families and spreading awareness about the importance of children’s mental health.

Together, with our esteemed partners and a network of dedicated organizations, we work tirelessly to advance the cause of children’s mental health.

As we embark on this journey together, let us reaffirm our commitment to nurturing the emotional and psychological resilience of our children. By standing united, we can create a future where every child feels supported, understood, and empowered to thrive.



MARYLAND
FAMILY
NETWORK



Sponsor the Campaign

For over 25 years, the Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign in Maryland has been dedicated to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and connecting families with vital resources.

By sponsoring the 2026 Campaign, you will:

- Help distribute essential resources and information to schools and communities.
- Expand the campaign's reach with increased engagement activities throughout the year.
- Play a crucial role in reaching additional underserved populations and communities.
- Join a growing community of advocates.
- Be recognized as a leader in promoting healthy families and communities.



Your support sends a powerful message that your business or organization recognizes that mental health is more than the absence of a disorder. Mental health influences children's thoughts, emotions, and actions, impacting their developmental milestones, social skills, and ability to cope with challenges. Supporting mentally healthy childhoods contributes to positive quality of life, fostering thriving families and communities. This sponsorship is not only an endorsement of these values and of building strong communities but is also an opportunity to increase awareness, share your commitment with a broader network, and enhance your brand presence across every county in Maryland.

[Learn More About Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

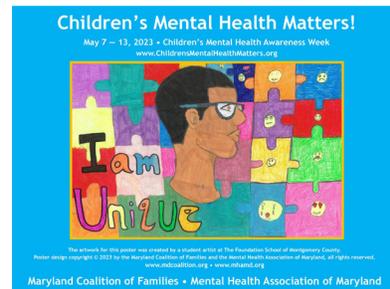
2026 Poster Contest: Help Spread the Word

Each year, student artwork is selected and featured in our annual Children’s Mental Health Matters poster. This year, our contest theme is “No Judgment, Just Help,” which is the mission of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The 988 Lifeline is a vital resource for families and youth to get support when someone is struggling with problems like stress, depression, and anxiety. MHAMD is partnering with the Maryland Department of Health and [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) to share the importance of reaching out for help when needed.

To participate, Maryland students should create artwork that illustrates this message of hope. The winning artwork will become the official 2026 Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign poster, inspiring people statewide to reach out for support.

All Maryland students up to the age of 18 are invited to participate. **The contest deadline is February 20th, 2026.**

[Go Here to Learn More & Submit Artwork](#)



[Go Here to Check Out Past Campaign Posters](#)

Impact of Mental Health

Children's mental health has never been more urgent. More than 36% of Maryland high school students report feeling persistently sad or hopeless, and 18% of high schoolers and 24% of middle schoolers have seriously considered suicide¹. According to a 2025 report from Mental Health America², Maryland's percentage of serious suicidal ideation among youth aged 12-17 is 5th highest in the nation. The need for accessible, effective programs that support children, adolescents, and their families is critical.

Mental health is not simply the absence of a mental disorder. Mental health affects how children think, feel, and act. A mentally healthy childhood means meeting emotional milestones, building social skills, coping with challenges, and thriving at home, in school, and in their community.

Supportive environments make a profound difference. Children with caregivers and communities that foster safe, positive relationships while practicing nurturing parenting and emotional support are less likely to be abused or neglected.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland addresses these needs through community advocacy, outreach, and education initiatives, including the Children's Mental Health Campaign. Key programs include:

- **Mental Health First Aid Maryland:** Teaches individuals how to recognize signs of mental health mental health or substance use concern or crisis and respond effectively.
- **Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR):** Suicide prevention training providing intervention strategies.
- **Go Green:** Statewide campaign to raise and reduce stigma around mental health and substance use.
- **EngageWith:** An evidence-based virtual skills training program offering tools to better support older adults through all phases of aging.
- **Healthy New Moms:** Education and outreach campaign focused on raising awareness of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and improving pathways to care.
- **Advocacy:** MHAMD's public policy team works with stakeholders to affect laws and policies at the state and federal level.

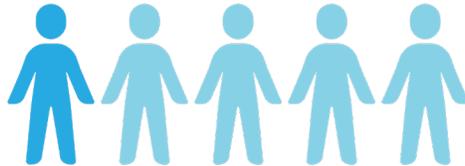
Together, these programs foster early intervention, promote family wellbeing, and equip Marylanders with the knowledge and tools to recognize mental health challenges, respond effectively, and access appropriate care. By combining education, resources, and community partnerships, MHAMD is helping ensure that children, parents, and communities have the support they need to thrive.

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-2022-2023.aspx>

² <https://mhanational.org/the-state-of-mental-health-in-america/>

Fast Facts

PREVALENCE



According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), **approximately 1 in 5 U.S. children and adolescents may experience a mental health condition at any given time.** Recognizing and addressing these conditions is crucial, as mental health is just as vital as physical health for a child's overall wellbeing.

SUICIDE RATES

2nd Leading Cause of Death

According to the CDC, **suicide was the second leading cause of death for individuals aged 10 to 24 years old** in the United States in 2020. Among children aged 10 to 14, the suicide rate nearly tripled from 2007 to 2017.

ACCESS TO CARE



Access to mental health care for children remains a significant challenge. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) reports that only **20% of children with diagnosable anxiety disorders** and **40% of children with diagnosable depression receive treatment.**

Key Messaging

EARLY ONSET: Mental health conditions can affect children of all ages, including infants. Understanding typical developmental behaviors and recognizing when a child's behavior deviates from the norm can help in identifying when intervention may be necessary.

INTEGRAL TO HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT: Mental health, encompassing emotional and behavioral wellbeing, significantly impacts a child's cognitive and social development. While experiencing occasional feelings of anger, frustration, or sadness is normal, persistent and interfering emotions may signal the need for support.

EARLY INTERVENTION: Prompt intervention is key to preventing long-term or severe mental health conditions from persisting into adulthood. By addressing concerns early on, we can empower children to navigate life's challenges with resilience and strength.

UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE: Mental health is relevant to everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, income, or education. Fostering mental health awareness creates an inclusive environment where all children have the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

SELF-CARE AND ROLE MODELING: As caregivers, educators, or community members, it's essential to prioritize our own mental health. By prioritizing self-care, we not only enhance our own wellbeing but also serve as positive role models for the children in our lives, teaching them the importance of self-care and resilience.

ANXIETY DISORDERS: Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health issues affecting children. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) reports that anxiety disorders impact around 8% of children and adolescents in the United States.

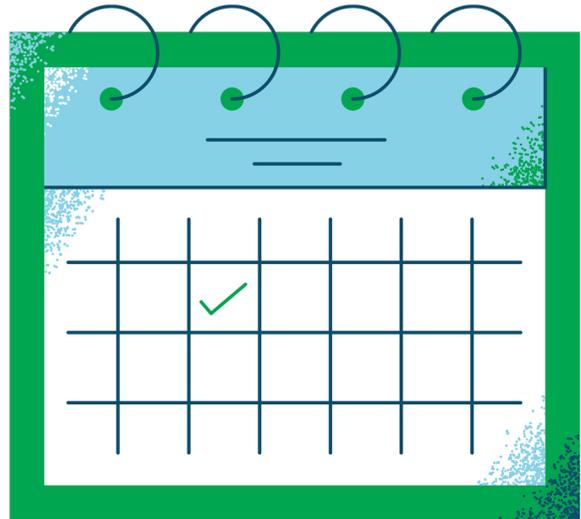
DEPRESSION: Depression is another prevalent mental health condition among children and adolescents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 3.2% of children aged 3 to 17 in the United States have diagnosed depression.

MANAGEABLE: "Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults are not only prevalent but also manageable. With timely intervention and support, these challenges can be overcome, leading to healthier and happier lives." - Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

Important Dates & Champion Checklist

IMPORTANT DATES

- **May 3rd - 9th:** Children's Mental Health Awareness Week
- **May 7th:** Wear **GREEN** for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day
- **May 21st from 11:30AM-12:30PM:** May Children's Mental Health Webinar
- **May is Mental Health Awareness Month**
- Check out the [CMHM Events Calendar](#) to learn about upcoming awareness events



CHAMPION CHECKLIST

- Register as a Champion
- Help share the [2026 Annual Poster Contest](#)
- Update your email signature line (ideas included in toolkit)
- Plan an activity or event for your school or community (suggestions included)
- [Tell us about the awareness events you're planning](#)
- [Request free campaign promotional items for your events](#)
- Follow CMHM Campaign on social media to share content and spread awareness
- Wear **GREEN** on May 7th for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day
- Order or [print resources from the CMHM website](#) to share
- Order CMHM merchandise from our [Champion Online Store](#)
- Share your impact by completing the [CMHM Impact Form](#)
- Register for the [CMHM Champion QPR Suicide Prevention Training](#) on May 12th

To brainstorm with other champions in your county, email info@cmhm.mhamd.org.

Not sure where to start? Pages 12-20 are full of ideas based on where you might fit! Included are tips for individuals, families, school/youth serving groups, and businesses.

Tips for Individuals



- **Educate yourself:** Take the time to learn about children’s mental health issues, including common disorders, warning signs, and available treatments.
- **Support organizations:** Donate your time or resources to organizations that focus on children’s mental health advocacy, research, or support services. Volunteer at local mental health clinics, participate in fundraising events, or contribute to awareness campaigns.
 - » [Order CMHM merchandise](#) and proudly display it!
 - » Add a CMHM message to your work or personal email signature!
- **Start conversations:** Initiate conversations about children’s mental health with friends, family members, colleagues, and community members. Encourage open dialogue, share personal experiences if comfortable, and provide support to those who may be struggling.
 - » [Share our digital resources](#) with your network, families, and anyone you know who could benefit from them.
 - » Write a letter to your newspaper editor about the importance of children’s mental health.
 - » Wear green on May 7th for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day.
- **Advocate for policy change:** Advocate for [policies and legislation](#) that prioritize children’s mental health and improve access to mental health services. Write to policymakers, participate in advocacy campaigns, and support organizations working to effect change.
- **Promote self-care:** Encourage parents, caregivers, educators, and other adults to prioritize self-care and mental wellness. Offer support and resources to help them manage stress, seek help when needed, and model healthy behaviors for children.



Tips for Individuals CONT.



- **Provide resources:** Share information about local mental health resources, such as support groups, counseling services, hotlines, and online resources, with those who may need them. Make sure that families know where to turn for help when facing mental health challenges.
 - » Follow us on social media and share our posts!
 - » [Subscribe to our newsletters](#) and share them with those you think might be interested!
- **Create supportive environments:** Foster environments that prioritize mental health and wellbeing in schools, workplaces, and communities. Promote kindness, empathy, and inclusivity, and work to reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues.
- **Organize events:** Organize events or activities in your community to raise awareness about children's mental health. This could include panel discussions, workshops, art exhibitions, mental health screenings, walk and chalk, art party, community family fun event, and more.
- **Listen and support:** Be there for children who may be struggling with mental health issues. Listen without judgment, offer support and encouragement, and help them access the resources they need to thrive.



Tips for Families



- **Have open discussions:** Create a safe space within your family to openly discuss mental health. Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings and listen to them without judgment. Discuss the importance of mental wellness and how it affects overall health.
- **Participate in activities:** Engage in activities together that promote mental wellbeing, including mindfulness exercises, outdoor activities, creative arts and crafts, or volunteering for mental health awareness events. Practice these activities:
 - » [What Does Mental Health Mean to Me? Activity](#)
 - » [Coping Skills Cards](#)
 - » [Coping Skills Bookmark Activity](#)
 - » [Inside Out Movie and Discussion Prompt](#)
 - » [Calming Phone Image Activity \(Middle/High School\)](#)
 - » [Assertive Statements Activity](#)
 - » [Breathing Wands Activity](#)
 - » [Emotion Planning Activity](#)
 - » Create a “Things I wish my family knew” note box for family members to freely write notes and put into a box in your home. Take time to read and discuss the notes at dinner!
- **Read books about mental health together:** Check out our mental health book lists to read with children in the family. Age-appropriate mental health books can help a child/teen name and understand feelings, deal with painful experiences, cope with strong emotions, and more.
 - » [Toddler/Preschool \(0-4\)](#)
 - » [Early Elementary \(5-7\)](#)
 - » [Upper Elm & Middle \(9-12\)](#)
 - » [Teens \(13+\)](#)
 - » [Stand Up to Stress - Coloring and Activity Book \(8-12\)](#)
- **Attend awareness events:** [Check out our events calendar](#) to participate in an awareness event near your family. Spread awareness in your community by sharing resources, participating in fundraisers, or organizing events to promote understanding and acceptance.



Tips for Families CONT.



- **Educate your family:** Take the time to learn about children’s mental health issues as a family. Understand common disorders, warning signs, and available resources for support. Our Family Resource Kit, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), includes information on when and where to seek professional help, common behaviors or diagnoses, and more.
- **Spread awareness with CMHM merch:** [Order CMHM T-Shirts for the family](#) and proudly wear them! Make sure you take a picture and tag us on social media [#CMHMMaryland](#)
- **Support each other:** Be supportive of each other’s mental health within the family. Offer encouragement, validation, and empathy during challenging times. Encourage healthy coping strategies and problem-solving skills.
- **Seek professional help if needed:** If you or a family member is struggling with mental health issues, don’t hesitate to seek professional help. Reach out to therapists, counselors, or mental health professionals who can provide support and guidance.
- **Promote self-care:** Encourage self-care practices for the whole family. Take time to engage in activities that promote relaxation, stress reduction, and overall wellbeing. Model healthy behaviors and encourage each other to prioritize self-care.
- **Stay connected:** Stay connected as a family and maintain open lines of communication. Check in with each other regularly and be there to offer support and encouragement during both good times and bad.



Tips for School/Youth Serving Groups



- **Organize awareness events:** Host events throughout the month dedicated to raising awareness about children's mental health. This could include guest speakers, workshops, assemblies, or informational sessions for students, parents, and staff.

- » [Order CMHM merchandise](#) and proudly display it!
- » Invite family, friends, classrooms/schools, staff/team, and more, to wear green on May 7th for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. Take a picture and share on social media using the hashtag #CMHMMaryland or email to info@cmhm.mhamd.org
- » Work with local leaders for a Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Proclamation event



- **Promote mental health education:** Integrate mental health education into the school curriculum. Offer lessons or activities that teach students about emotional wellbeing, coping skills, stress management, and recognizing signs of mental health issues.

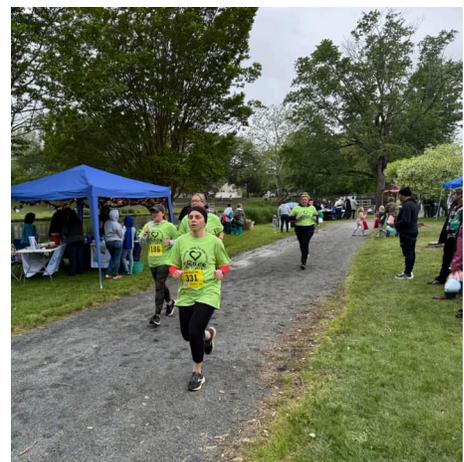
- » Booklists – Check out our mental health book lists to incorporate into your library or read to your classroom. Age-appropriate mental health books can help a child/teen name and understand feelings, deal with painful experiences, cope with strong emotions, and more.
 - [Toddler/Preschool \(0-4\)](#)
 - [Early Elementary \(5-7\)](#)
 - [Upper Elm & Middle \(9-12\)](#)
 - [Teens \(13+\)](#)
- » Plan for morning announcements for every day during CMHM Awareness Week May 3rd-9th. See page 32 for our morning announcement scripts.



Tips for School/Youth Serving Groups CONT.



- **Provide resources:** Ensure that students, parents, and staff have access to resources for mental health support. This could include counseling services, support groups, hotlines, online resources, and referrals to mental health professionals.
 - » Family Resource Kit ([English/Spanish](#)) – Includes information on when and where to seek professional help, common behaviors or diagnoses, and more.
 - » The [Maryland Action Plan for Preventing Suicide in Schools \(MAPS\) equips](#) K-12 public and private school communities with the necessary tools for effective suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
 - » [Family Self-Care Tips](#)
 - » [Share our digital resources](#) with your employees, vendors, partners, etc.
- **Create a supportive environment:** Foster a school culture that prioritizes mental health and wellbeing. Promote kindness, empathy, and inclusivity, and work to reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues.
 - » Add a CMHM message to your work email signature!
 - » Display your [2026 Champion badge](#)
 - » Develop an annual CMHM plan using the calendar in this toolkit.
- **Train staff:** Provide training for teachers, counselors, and other school staff on how to support students' mental health needs. Offer professional development opportunities focused on recognizing signs of mental health issues, providing support, and referring students to appropriate resources.
 - » [Educator Resource Kit](#) – Includes information on a wide range of behavioral health issues



Tips for School/Youth Serving Groups CONT.



for teachers/school personnel.

- » Provide an Adult/ Youth Mental Health First Aid course or contact mhfatraining@mhamd.org to host a training for a group. [Research shows that MHFA](#) increases mental health literacy, confidence and likelihood to help a person in distress, and empathy/acceptance toward someone with mental health challenges.
- » Invite school community and families to educational opportunities, such as our [monthly webinars!](#)

- **Implement wellness initiatives:** Implement wellness initiatives that promote physical and mental wellbeing among students. This could include mindfulness activities, yoga classes, exercise programs, and healthy eating initiatives. Go to page 30 in the toolkit for activities for all ages!
- **Encourage students to seek help:** Create a culture where asking for support is normalized. Provide information on how to access mental health services and encourage students to reach out to trusted adults if they are struggling.
- **Engage parents and caregivers:** Discuss children's mental health with parents and caregivers. Provide resources and information on how they can support their child's mental health at home and encourage open communication between school and home.
- **Raise funds:** Hold fundraisers or awareness campaigns to support organizations that focus on children's mental health advocacy, research, or support services. Get students involved in planning and participating in these activities to promote engagement and awareness.
- **Evaluate and improve:** Continuously evaluate your school's mental health initiatives and programs to ensure they are effective and meet the needs of students. Solicit feedback from students, parents, and staff, and make adjustments as needed.



Tips for Businesses



- **Actively participate in awareness campaigns:** Use your business platform to raise awareness about children’s mental health. Utilize social media, email newsletters, or your website to share educational resources, personal stories, and tips for supporting children’s mental health.
 - » [Order CMHM merchandise](#) and proudly display it!
 - » Wear green on May 7th for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day. Tag the campaign in social media with pics [#CMHMMaryland](#)
- **Employee education and support:** Provide resources and training to employees on how to support children’s mental health, especially for those who are parents or caregivers. Offer access to educational materials, webinars, or counseling services if possible.
 - » Provide an Adult or Youth Mental Health First Aid course or contact mhfatraining@mhamd.org to host a training for a group. Research shows that MHFA increases mental health literacy, confidence and likelihood to help a person in distress, and empathy/acceptance toward someone with mental health challenges.
 - » Contact campaign coordinators at info@cmhm.mhamd.org to host a virtual educational event about children’s mental health.
 - » Use materials in this toolkit as messages for employees.
- **Community outreach and partnerships:** Partner with local mental health organizations or schools to organize community events or awareness campaigns. This could include sponsoring mental health workshops, offering space for support groups, or participating in fundraising activities. Contact info@cmhm.mhamd.org if you have interest!



Tips for Champions: Businesses



- **Promote mental wellness in the workplace:** Create a supportive work environment that prioritizes mental wellness for employees. Offer flexible work schedules, encourage breaks, and provide resources for stress management and mental health support. Implement policies that prioritize mental health for employees and their families.
 - » Family Resource Kit ([English](#)/[Spanish](#)) – Includes information on when and where to seek professional help, common behaviors or diagnoses, and more.
 - » [Share our digital resources](#) with your employees, vendors, partners, etc.
 - » Help employees and customers understand how to easily access mental health through telemental health with Telemental Health Care Fact Sheets:
 - What is Telemental Health Care? ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
 - Tips for Discussing Your Child’s Mental Health Care Provider ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
 - Preparing for a Telemental Health Care Visit ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
 - » Offer mental health days, access to counseling services, or flexible leave policies for caregivers.
- **Raise funds for mental health initiatives:** Launch fundraising initiatives to support children’s mental health programs or organizations. This could involve donating a percentage of sales during Children’s Mental Health Awareness Month or organizing charity events. [Consider sponsoring our campaign!](#)
- **Support employee-led initiatives:** Encourage employees to organize events or initiatives to support children’s mental health awareness. Provide resources and support for employee-led projects, such as fundraising events or awareness campaigns.
- **Advocate for policy change:** Use your business platform to advocate for policies that prioritize children’s mental health at the local, state, or national level. Support legislation that improves access to mental health services for children and families.



Campaign Resources/Activity List

We realize your life is busy and are here to support you along the way. The resources and activities listed below can be used in the classroom, at home, at an awareness event, or however you see fit.

- Family Resource Kit ([English](#)/[Spanish](#)) – Includes information on when and where to seek professional help, common behaviors or diagnoses, and more.
- [Educator Resource Kit](#) – Includes information on a wide range of behavioral health issues for teachers/school personnel.
- Telemental Health Care Tip Sheets:
 - » What is Telemental Health Care? ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
 - » Tips for Discussing Your Child’s Mental Health Care Provider ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
 - » Preparing for a Telemental Health Care Visit ([English](#))/([Spanish](#))
- Booklists – Age-appropriate mental health books that can help a child/teen name and understand feelings, deal with painful experiences, cope with strong emotions, and more.
 - » [Toddler/Preschool \(0-4\)](#)
 - » [Early Elementary \(5-7\)](#)
 - » [Upper Elm & Middle \(9-12\)](#)
 - » [Teens \(13+\)](#)
- Printable coloring sheets:
 - » [Today I Feel \(English\)](#)
 - » [Today I Feel \(Spanish\)](#)
- [What Does Mental Health Mean to Me? Activity](#)
- [Coping Skills Cards](#)
- [Coping Skills Bookmark Activity](#)
- [Inside Out Movie and Discussion Prompt](#)
- [Calming Phone Image Activity \(Middle/High School\)](#)
- [Assertive Statements Activity](#)
- [Breathing Wands Activity](#)
- [Emotion Planning Activity](#)
- [Family Self-Care Tips](#)

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- [Stand Up to Stress – A Coloring and Activity Book for Kids 8-12](#)
- [Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People](#)
- [Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools: An Action Guide for School and District Leaders](#)
- [Safety Plan for a Crisis Template](#)
- [Show us your brain worksheet](#)
- [How Do You Self-Care?](#)

Year-Round Awareness Calendar

Develop an Annual Children's Mental Health Awareness Plan!

Recognizing and promoting children's mental health is a continuous effort. Raise awareness throughout the year to help create a safe and supportive environment for children and families. *Below is a non-exhaustive list of awareness observances or topics to highlight throughout the year.*

JANUARY

National Mental Wellness Month: This month encourages individuals to prioritize their mental wellness and adopt healthy habits to support their overall wellbeing.

FEBRUARY

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: Dating violence can have serious consequences for adolescents' mental health. This month is dedicated to raising awareness about teen dating violence and promoting healthy relationships among young people.

MARCH

National Social Work Month: Social workers play a vital role in supporting children and families' mental health. March is an opportunity to recognize their contributions and advocate for policies and programs that support children's wellbeing.

Youth Art Month: Promotes art and art education in the United States. It is observed in March, with thousands of American schools participating, often with the involvement of local art museums and civic organizations.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month: This campaign focuses on the disabled community and highlights how those with developmental disabilities live normal lives. It is about inclusion, awareness, and education.

APRIL

National Child Abuse Prevention Month: Recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Autism Awareness Month: April is Autism Acceptance Month and includes observances to highlight the increasing number of individuals identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the impacts on families and support services. It is also an opportunity to celebrate the unique perspectives of those living with ASD.

Year-Round Awareness Calendar CONT.

MAY

Mental Health Awareness Month: While not specifically focused on children, Mental Health Awareness Month provides an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health issues affecting people of all ages, including children and adolescents.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, May 3rd-9th: Provides an opportunity to highlight the work we have done throughout the year to support children's mental health. This week we encourage families, communities and individuals to come together and raise awareness. We do this through education, advocacy and a variety of community events, and outreach.

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, May 7th: Children's Mental Health Awareness Week culminates on May 7th, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. We encourage everyone to wear **GREEN** in solidarity and raise awareness about the importance of children's mental health and show that positive mental health is essential to a child's healthy development.

JUNE

National Pride Month - LGBTQ Pride Month, often shortened to Pride Month is dedicated to celebration and commemoration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) pride. Pride Month began after the Stonewall riots, a series of gay liberation protests in 1969.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month - Help spread the word that effective PTSD treatments are available. Everyone with PTSD—whether they are Veterans or civilian survivors of sexual assault, serious accidents, natural disasters, or other traumatic events—needs to know that treatments really do work and can lead to a better quality of life.

JULY

Disability Pride Month: July 26th marks the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which became law in 1990. Because this ground-breaking legislation was signed in July, disability advocates around the country established July as Disability Pride Month.

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month: Raise awareness for the mental health struggles faced by minority communities.

AUGUST

National Grief Awareness Day: Typically takes place on August 30th of each year. It can be an opportunity to raise awareness of the different manifestations of grief. You can acknowledge this day by taking time for self-care, remembering loved ones you've lost, and joining a grief support group.

Year-Round Awareness Calendar CONT.

SEPTEMBER

National Suicide Prevention Month: This month is dedicated to raising awareness about suicide prevention, promoting mental health resources, and supporting those who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts or feelings.

- » Suicide Prevention Week – Sept 6th-12th, 2026
- » World Suicide Prevention Day – Sept 10th

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month: This campaign helps parents and caregivers prevent child obesity early and understand the physical health problems associated with the condition.

National Recovery Month: Increase awareness and understanding of mental health and substance use recovery, highlighting that recovery is possible with treatment and support.



OCTOBER

National Bullying Prevention Month: Bullying can have a significant impact on children's mental health. October is dedicated to raising awareness about bullying prevention strategies and promoting kindness and acceptance in schools and communities.

ADHD Awareness Month: ADHD Awareness Month's goal is to provide reliable information and resources to help people thrive with ADHD. In keeping with our 2026 theme, Awareness is Key!, we encourage the ADHD community to increase awareness and understanding by sharing ADHD information and supports with all who could benefit.

Depression Awareness Month: The purpose is to increase understanding, decrease stereotypes, and help educate on how depression and other mental health issues impact people. Increasing the overall understanding of depression or other conditions helps to overcome stereotypes.

World Mental Health Day, Oct 10th: World Mental Health Day takes place every year on October 10th to spotlight mental health around the world, raise awareness of mental health issues and encourage efforts to support those experiencing mental health issues.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month: In October and beyond, infant caregivers and service/healthcare providers can join Safe to Sleep® and its partners to encourage safe infant sleep and help raise awareness about ways to reduce the risk of SIDS Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Year-Round Awareness Calendar CONT.

NOVEMBER

National Family Literacy Month: While not directly related to mental health, promoting literacy can have a positive impact on children’s cognitive development and emotional wellbeing.

National Family Caregivers Month: This is a time to recognize and honor caregivers, raise awareness around caregiving issues, educate communities, and work to increase support for our nation’s caregivers.

National Adoption Month: A time to raise awareness and educate the public about adoption, and recognize the people and organizations that support adoptive families.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, Nov 23rd: Also known as Survivors Day, this awareness day brings together communities around the world to remember and honor the lives of those lost to suicide.

DECEMBER

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Awareness Month:

Each year, millions of Americans are affected by this condition, which brings on significant mood changes in response to the changing of seasons. Typically, SAD occurs during late fall and winter months, when there is less sunlight and colder weather.



Maryland Services & Supports for Families

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

The [988 Lifeline](#) provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR CHILDREN

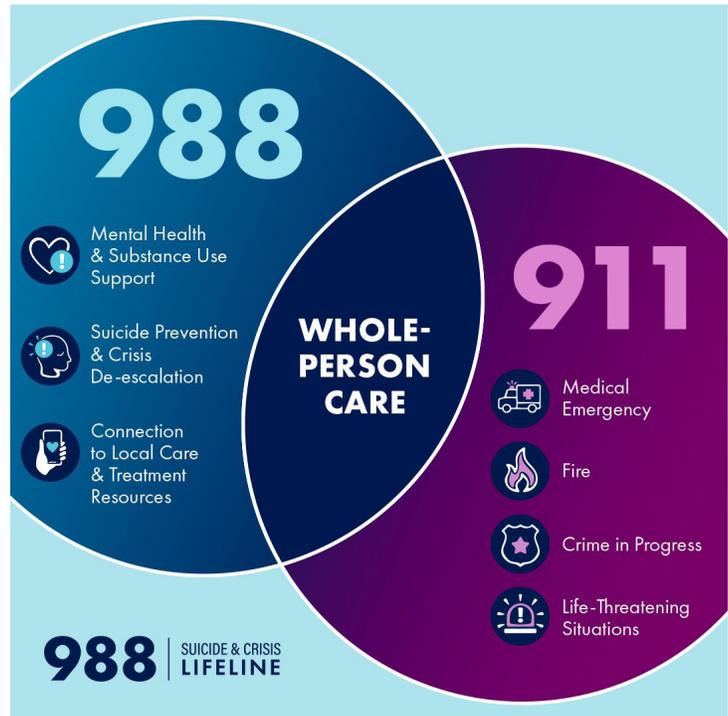
The [Governor's Office for Children](#) leads statewide efforts to build a comprehensive network of supports, programs, and services for children and their families to promote social and emotional well-being; reduce food insecurity; combat youth homelessness; expand access to health services; improve education outcomes and job readiness; expand access to good jobs; and increase economic opportunity in sustainable ways. The office drives a holistic, coordinated approach within state government and across public and private sectors at the federal, state, and local levels.

LOCAL CARE TEAMS

Local Care Teams serve as the point of access to services for children and youth. As of January 1st, 2018, the [Local Management Boards](#) are the administrative home for the Local Care Teams. Parents, family members, or agencies make referrals directly to the Local Care Teams to seek assistance with accessing services, to develop plans of care for community-based services, and to coordinate services from multiple agencies. Please [contact the Local Care Team Coordinator in your jurisdiction](#) to request assistance or submit a referral.

HANDLE WITH CARE IN MARYLAND

If a law enforcement officer encounters a child during a call, that child's name and three words, [HANDLE WITH CARE](#), are forwarded to the school/childcare agency before the school



Maryland Services & Supports for Families

bell rings the next day. The school implements individual, class and whole school trauma-sensitive curricula so that traumatized children are “Handled With Care”. If a child needs more intervention, on-site trauma-focused mental healthcare is available at the school.

CHILD WELLBEING SCORECARD

For more than 20 years, the Children’s Cabinet and the State’s child-serving agencies have utilized the [Child Wellbeing Scorecard](#), representing the Office’s effort to track and consolidate data from multiple agencies and jurisdictions to ensure transparency and allow for improved evaluation of programs.

CHILD, ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT (CAYA) COORDINATORS DIRECTORY

A comprehensive statewide [directory of Child, Adolescents, and Young Adults \(CAYA\) coordinators](#) serving each county’s Local Behavioral Health Authority, Core Service Agency, or Local Addiction Authority. These coordinators support families by connecting them to essential public behavioral health resources, services, and system navigation assistance, ensuring informed access to appropriate care and supports.

PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

Peer Support is delivered services by a person with lived experience of a mental health and/or substance use challenge, who may also identify as a consumer, client, patient, or survivor. [Go here to access an introductory list of statewide family peer support and peer support resources](#) available to Maryland residents. These services connect individuals, youth, and families with trained peers and specialists who draw on lived experience to offer support, guidance, advocacy, and connection to community resources. This list is not a comprehensive directory; additional county, local, and specialized peer support services may also be available.

Awareness Week Proclamation Sample

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

May 3rd-9th, 2026

WHEREAS, mental health and substance use conditions often remain invisible, yet profoundly impact children, youth, and families; and

WHEREAS, we must create compassionate communities across our state in which every child is seen, uplifted, and supported; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable health and mental health care inhibits wellbeing for our state and its residents; and

WHEREAS, the provision of equitable, culturally relevant, and effective health and behavioral health care paves the way for Maryland's youth to access opportunities for work, income, and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, unlocking the potential of every Marylander and enhancing support for youth navigating mental health and substance use challenges is essential for our state to thrive; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial to collaborate in raising awareness of children's mental health importance, fostering the well-being of all Maryland's children and families, reducing stigma and increasing acceptance; and

WHEREAS, Children's Mental Health Awareness Week is annually observed during May to elevate awareness, acceptance and understanding of children's mental health and well-being and that impact on the future of all Marylanders.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [_____], do hereby declare May 3rd-9th, 2026, to be Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in Maryland. I urge citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses, and schools to unite in increasing awareness, acceptance, understanding, and collaboration regarding children's mental health.

Social Media Handles & Sample Posts

Below are sample social media posts that promote the campaign and mental health awareness. We encourage you to post photos, videos, stories, and more from your activities and events — tag us and use the hashtag #CMHMMaryland.

Encourage fellow champions, schools, and community members to join us online and amplify their involvement to boost participation! Let's rally together to create a stronger, more united front for children's mental health awareness.

FOLLOW US ON THE FOLLOWING PLATFORMS:



[@ChildrensMentalHealthMatters](#)



[@childrensmentalhealthmatters](#)



[@childrensmentalhealthmatters](#)



[@ChildrensMHM](#)

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS:

"Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults are real and they are widespread. But most importantly, they are treatable and often preventable." - Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General #CMHMMaryland

1 in 5 children and adolescents may have a mental health condition at any given time. By spreading awareness, we can help children get the support they need to thrive. #CMHM-Maryland

Mental health, also known as emotional or behavioral health, is a vital part of your child's medical health and development. It affects how individuals think, feel, and act. All children and teens have periods of anger, frustration, and sadness. For some kids, feelings can reach a tipping point and interfere with everyday life. Find resources to support a child in your community: www.bit.ly/CMHMCountyResources

Children of all ages, even young infants, can experience mental health conditions. It can be challenging to know the typical behaviors and moods for a child's developmental stage and if they have gone beyond the norm and need help. Download a Family Resource Kit: www.bit.ly/CMHMCampaignResources

Social Media Sample Posts CONT.

Mental health applies to everyone throughout their lives 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. Download School Services Tip Sheet: www.bit.ly/CMHMSchoolServices

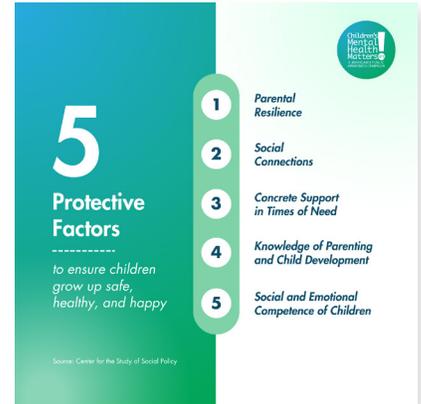
As a parent, it can be tough to navigate your child's mental health challenges. The Family Resource Kit from the Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign provides guidance, support, and resources to help your child thrive. Download the kit here: www.bit.ly/CMHMCampaignResources

As parents, family members, educators, or community members: we may have a lot on our plates or could be facing our own mental health challenges. It can feel easy to push our own needs to the side. However, making time for ourselves is essential to our overall wellbeing and being a role model for the children in our lives.



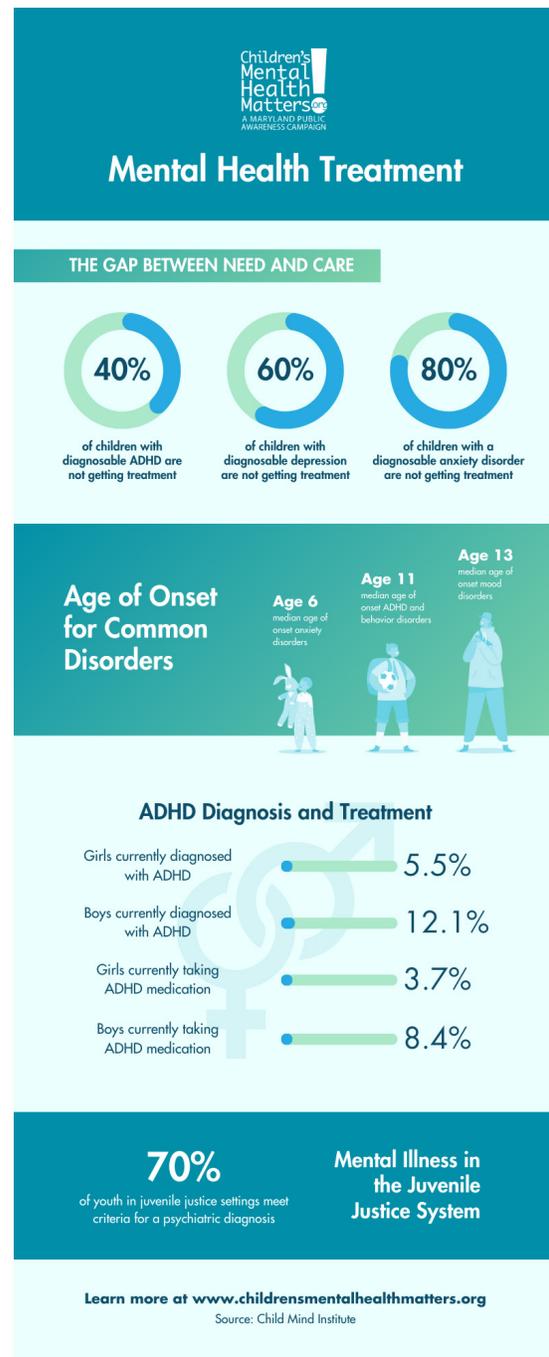
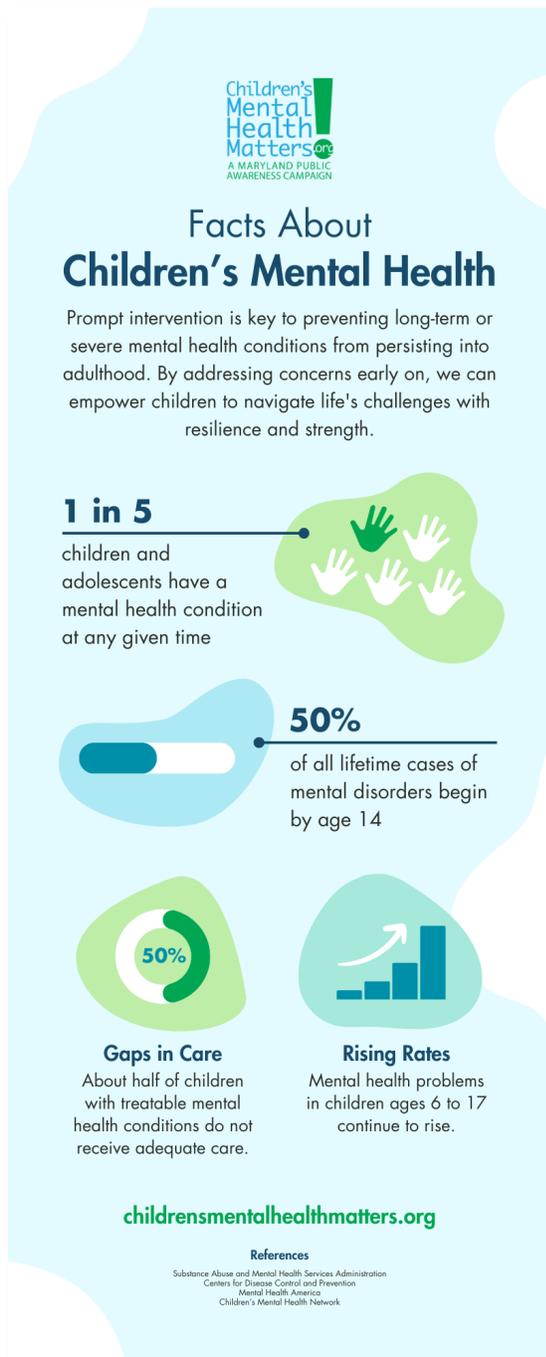
Social Media Graphics

To download these graphics, click on the image below. In your browser, right click on the image and select "Save Image As" and save to your computer. The image should be available in your downloads folder.



Infographics

To download these infographics, click on the image below. In your browser, download the PDF and save to your computer. The infographic should be available in your downloads folder.



Email Signatures & Digital Engagement Assets

Use these provided email signature templates between now and the end of May to promote Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week and your involvement with the campaign. [Go here for instructions on how to create an email signature.](#)

- Want to reduce stigma and raise awareness around the importance of children’s mental health? [Join us as a Children’s Mental Health Matters Champion today!](#)
- Help support the health and wellbeing of Maryland’s families by [becoming a Champion for Children’s Mental Health](#) during Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week, May 3rd-9th, 2026!
- I am a Champion for the Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign. You too can make a difference in the lives of children and families in your community. Learn more: [ChildrensMental-HealthMatters.org](#)
- Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is May 3rd-9th, 2026! Learn how you can join 2026 efforts at [ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](#). Follow the Campaign on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Linked-In](#).

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

To download, click on the image below. In your browser, right click on the image and select “Save Image As” and save to your computer. The image should be available in your downloads folder.



*Champion Badge,
English*



*Champion Badge,
Spanish*



Virtual Meeting Background

School Resource List

The resources listed on the previous pages and those on the following pages (35-40) can be used in the classroom to facilitate lessons on mental health.

Our school resources are ready to print, or you can copy and paste them into your own format.

PAGES 35-40 INCLUDE:

- Morning Announcement Scripts (Page 35-36)
- Give Yourself a Mental Health Grade (Page 37)
- Mental Health Goal Setting (Page 38)
- Mental Health Discussion Prompts (Page 39)
- Mental Health Essay Prompt (Page 40)



Morning Announcement Scripts

Students or staff can use the following scripts during the school's morning announcements 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.

- This week is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week! What is mental health? Mental health has to do with how you think, feel, and act. Mental health includes how well you take care of yourself, the quality of your relationships with other people, and how well you handle difficult situations, stress, and problems. Mental health is something everyone has, and it is important to check-in on our mental health regularly, just like we check-in on our physical health.
- Everyone has times when they struggle with their mental health. It is normal to have times when you might feel sad, nervous, worried, or when you might have a hard time managing your emotions and stress. If you are having a hard time, you are not alone! In fact, one in five people experience a mental health problem before the age of 18. *[Highlight specific individuals within your school who students can talk to, such as your school's counselor.]*
- Even though we all have difficulty with our mental health sometimes, it can be hard for people to talk about their mental health because they might feel embarrassed or ashamed, or they might worry that other people will think badly of them. This is called stigma. Stigma can make it harder to talk to someone when we are struggling with our mental health. However, it is important to talk to someone you trust so that you can get the help and support you deserve to feel your best! *[Highlight specific individuals within your school who students can talk to, such as your school's counselor.]*
- For kids who struggle with their mental health, talking to someone and getting extra support or help can make a big difference. Check in on your mental health, talk to someone you trust, and ask for help when you need it. Remember, **YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!**
- 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!

Give Yourself a Mental Health Grade

Instructions: Use the rubric below to give yourself a grade on different aspects of your mental health. The report card can be completed one section at a time or all at once.

Area	Rubric	Grade	Comments
Healthy Habits/Self-Care Healthy habits/self-care refer to things you do on a regular basis to maintain your physical/mental health (sleep, eating habits, physical activity, activities you enjoy, reaching out for help)	A - Almost always maintain healthy habits in most areas B - I usually maintain healthy habits in most areas C - I maintain healthy habits in some areas D - I do not maintain healthy habits in multiple areas F - I do not maintain healthy habits in most areas		
Mood How is your mood on most days? Do you feel good, positive, and content or unhappy, down or depressed?	A - I feel good most days B - I usually feel good with a few exceptions C - I usually feel okay D - I feel down or unhappy several days a week F - I feel sad or unhappy most of the time		
Relationships Relationships include friendships, relationships with your parents/caregivers, siblings, and other family members, and relationships with other peers and adults. Do you have positive and supportive relationships with these people?	A - I have good relationships with many people B - I have good relationships with most of the people in my life C - I occasionally have issues in certain relationships D - I have problems in one or more relationships or I do not have many positive relationships F - I do not have positive and supportive relationships		
Self-Esteem How do you feel about yourself? Are the thoughts you have about yourself and the messages you tell yourself accurate, positive, and encouraging?	A - I almost always feel good about myself B - I usually feel good about myself C - I feel okay with who I am D - I could work on my self esteem F - I do not feel good about myself		
Coping Skills When faced with a difficult or challenging situation, do you have several healthy strategies to use to help you overcome them?	A - I have a variety of coping skills I use often B - I have a few coping skills I use most of the time C - I sometimes use effective coping skills D - I do not have enough coping skills or do not use them often F - I do not have or use healthy coping skills		
Conflict Resolution When you have a problem, a decision you need to make, or a disagreement with someone, how well are you able to resolve the problem?	A - I almost always solve problems well B - I usually solve most problems well C - I sometimes have difficulty solving problems D - I usually have a hard time solving problems F - I almost always have difficulty solving problems well		
Making Good Choices How often do you make choices that help you achieve your goals and that have positive outcomes?	A - I almost always make good choices B - I usually make good choices C - Sometimes I make good choices D - I occasionally make poor choices F - I usually make poor choices		
Overall Mental Health Think about how you would rate your mental health across all areas. How are you doing on average?	A - I rated almost all areas as an A or B B - I rated most areas as an A or B C - I rated most areas as a C D - I rated several areas at a D or lower F - I rated most areas at a D or lower		

Mental Health Goal Setting

Instructions: Using the information on your mental health report card, identify area(s) for improvement and use the templates and examples below to create a mental health goal related to that area.

Template 1:

By or in _____ (set a specific deadline or amount of time), I will _____ (what behavior/action you will take) and _____ (include specific, measurable details about how you will improve this area of your mental health).

Template 2:

I will _____ (what behavior/action you will take) and _____ (include specific, measurable details about how you will improve this area of your mental health) _____ (how much/how often you will do the behavior.)

Example Goals:

- By January 31st, I will create a new sleep routine and will follow the new schedule (sleeping at least 8 hours of sleep per night) at least 80% of the time (6 out of 7 days per week).
- I will make a list of at least 10 different activities I enjoy, and I will do one activity for at least 10 minutes each day.
- By the end of this month, I will identify/find someone I feel comfortable talking to and check in with them at least once a week.
- I will write down positive affirmations and recite them to myself whenever I notice I am thinking badly about myself.
- In the next three months, I will learn and/or identify at least five different coping skills I can use to help me manage stress and difficult situations and I will use them as needed.
- I will learn a new conflict resolution strategy and I will use the strategy when in an argument or faced with a problem at least 75% of the time (in 3 out of every 4 conflicts).

My Mental Health Goal(s):

By _____ I will _____ and _____.

In _____ I will _____ and _____.

I will _____ and _____.

Mental Health Discussion Prompts

The discussion prompts below can be used for additional conversation and action with students.

Topic/Area	Discussion Prompt
Healthy Habits Self-Care	<p>Sleep: How much sleep per night is recommended for someone your age and are you getting enough sleep? What are your sleep habits? Do you feel tired/fatigued during the day?</p> <p>Eating: Are you getting the nutrition your body needs to function well? What are your current eating habits? Are you making healthy food choices?</p> <p>Activities: What physical activities do you do on a regular basis? What are the things you do that make you feel good, productive, or accomplished? What additional activities could you add to your life? Do you make time to relax and have fun?</p>
Mood	<p>Everyone has times when they feel sad or down. If you notice that you are feeling sad for longer than usual, the feeling of sadness is intense, or your low mood is getting in the way of things you need to do, those can be signs that your mental health might be suffering. How often do you check in on your mood? Who/how can you talk to when you are feeling down or not like yourself?</p>
Relationships	<p>Think about all the people you interact with in your life. This can include family or anyone who lives in your home, teachers/coaches, friends at home or at school, neighbors, extended family members, etc. What are your relationships with these people like? How would you rate each of your relationships overall on a scale from 1-10? What makes a healthy relationship? Where do you see room for improvement in your relationships?</p>
Self-Esteem	<p>When you think about yourself, what comes to mind? Can you identify your strengths and positive qualities? Do you have confidence and faith in yourself to be successful? Do you use your strengths to your advantage to help you be successful? Do you think the same way about yourself as others do? How could you improve your view of yourself?</p>
Coping Skills	<p>When you get upset, what do you do to calm down or feel better? Do those strategies work? Do the strategies you use create more problems or only help in the short-term? What coping skills would you like to try, or which would be realistic for you?</p>
Conflict Resolution	<p>Consider how you solve different kinds of problems –arguments/disagreements with other people versus solving personal problems. Are there ways you could improve your problem-solving skills? Are there certain situations where your problem-solving skills could be improved?</p>
Making Good Choices	<p>How do you usually feel about the choices you make? When you have made good choices, how did you make those choices? When you have made poor choices, why and how did you make those decisions? What is important for you to think about before you make a decision?</p>
Overall Mental Health	<p>Mental health is something everyone has, just like physical health. Why is our mental health important? Why is it important to check in on our mental health? How often do you check in on your mental health? Who can you talk to or get support from if you need help?</p>

