

# Children's Mental Health Matters!

a Maryland public awareness campaign

## Facts For Educators

### Self-Injurious Behaviors

Students who exhibit self-injurious behavior perform deliberate and repetitive acts of injuring their own body as a way to cope with overwhelming feelings and thoughts. Some forms of self-injurious behavior include cutting, carving, scratching, burning, branding, biting, bruising, hitting, and picking and pulling skin and hair. Self-injury has been found to occur in 10 to 20 percent of middle and high school students in the United States. Self-injury is a serious illness that is often accompanied by other mental health problems like depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder or anorexia nervosa.

#### Why is this important?

- Students who exhibit self-injurious behavior have difficulty verbally communicating their feelings with others.
- Students who exhibit self-injurious behavior are more likely to engage in other types of risky behavior, such as substance or alcohol abuse.
- Students who exhibit self-injurious behavior are more likely to isolate themselves from classmates.
- Students may inadvertently seriously harm themselves

#### What can educators do about it?

Do not ignore suspicious injuries you have noticed on a young person's body. If you suspect that a student is deliberately injuring themselves:

- Discuss the situation with the child's parents or caregiver. It is important to let the child's family know of your suspicions. Ask the family to help the student seek available resources.
- Offer support and reassurance to the student. It is important not to alienate a self-injuring student but rather to build trust.
- Students should be under supervision at all times, until they have been assessed as safe or given over to the care of their parents.

- Be aware that the student's behavior is usually a symptom of a more serious underlying problem. Talk to the student about what's going on in his/her life that could be triggering this behavior.
- Notify the school clinicians about the student's behavior, and ask them to provide additional information and resources to the students and caregivers.

Children's  
Mental  
Health  
Matters.org

A MARYLAND PUBLIC  
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

coordinated by

mhamd   
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

MCF  
maryland coalition of families

[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

## **Resources/Links**

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Facts for Families No. 73: Self-Injury in Adolescents.** [http://www.aacap.org/App\\_Themes/AACAP/docs/facts\\_for\\_families/73\\_self\\_injury\\_in\\_adolescents.pdf](http://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/facts_for_families/73_self_injury_in_adolescents.pdf)

**National Association of School Psychologists**  
<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/Self-Mutilation%20March%2004.pdf>

**Mental Health America The country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping ALL people live mentally healthier lives.**  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

**Fact Sheet on Self-Injury**  
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/self-injury>

**S.A.F.E Alternatives (Self-Abuse Finally Ends):**  
<http://www.selfinjury.com>

*Adapted from Resources found on:*  
[www.schoolmentalhealth.org](http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org)  
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MHAMD ~ 443-901-1550 ~ [www.mhamd.org](http://www.mhamd.org)

MCF ~ 410-730-8267 ~ [www.mdcoalition.org](http://www.mdcoalition.org)

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 and Mental Hygiene - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with over 250 partners and schools across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health. For more information, please visit [www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org).