

Guide to getting help for your child:

KNOWING THE WARNING SIGNS

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following:

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent disobedience or aggression and temper tantrums

WHAT TO DO IF YOU NOTICE SYMPTOMS

BE ATTENTIVE. If your child has behavioral or emotional problems, the problems may appear at home, or they may surface in other ways. If you think you notice some or any of the symptoms listed above, it is important to identify a mental health concern early, so that your child can receive the proper care if he or she needs it. Many behavioral and emotional problems can be addressed with treatments that are safe and effective.

As a parent, you will want to follow a two-step approach if you are troubled by your child's behavior.

- 1) First, whether an ongoing problem exists that is affecting your child's life.
- 2) Second, if such a problem does exist, you need to know how and where to find the professional mental health services that might help your child.



- 1) **Family member or trusted friend** can be helpful if they have gone through something similar or if they have helpful observations about your child's behavior
- 2) **Pediatrician** can help someone you can turn to about any questions about your child's health or behavior
- 3) **Children's teachers, administrators and health care staff** can be a good source of information and support. They can come up with strategies to help your child at school.
- 4) **Psychiatrists or mental health professionals** are trained to provide different kinds of care and are a good source of evaluation and starting down a path of helping your child get the right type of treatment and care
- 5) **Community, youth agencies** are a good place to turn to have programs and service that are designed to meet the needs of the child. They can be specialized and provide extra support
- 6) **Hospital emergency department** can help if a child is in crisis and/or may cause harm to himself or herself or others
- 7) **Police or DYS custody(detention)** can help if the crisis situation has gotten to a level that you require help with managing.

FINDING THE RIGHT CARE

Seeking help

Your child's situation	When to get help	Where to get help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developmental delay or problem ■ Mild to moderate change in behavior ■ You are worried but not alarmed 	<p>Soon (a routine assessment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pediatrician ■ Mental health professional ■ School ■ Family/Friend ■ Community agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Major change in behavior ■ Child seems unable to function without help ■ You feel unable to cope or help 	<p>48–72 hours (urgent)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pediatrician ■ Mental health professional ■ School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Severe, out-of-control behavior ■ Child may be a threat to self or others ■ You are frightened 	<p>Immediately (emergency)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hospital emergency department ■ Police

Use this table as a rough guideline to the type of help you should seek according to your child's situation. Note that every child is different and if you feel like any situation is not normal or that you or your child might be at risk for getting hurt, please call 911 immediately.

TIPS FOR PARENTING A CHILD WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

- 1. Listen and try to be understanding** – Listen without judgement so that your child feels like they can come to you with how they're really feeling.
- 2. Show them affection** – Show and tell them how much you do care. This can help them feel like they belong and like an irreplaceable part of the family
- 3. Research the condition** – There are many different mental illnesses, read up on your child's specific condition. This will help you better understand not only the condition but also what helps recovery and what can prevent relapses in the future.
- 4. Don't blame yourself** – Your main priority is to be there for your child and help them. The condition could've been caused by anything and is not your fault.
- 5. Encourage social interaction with friends and family** – It is crucial that you encourage your child build connections with family members and friends. A stronger network can help with coping and making sure the child is doing alright.
- 6. Provide a peaceful and loving environment** – A loving environment can be so helpful for your child's recovery and wellbeing.
- 7. Do activities together** – Activities can help create a toolbox of healthy coping mechanisms that can be integrated into their de-escalation plan.
- 8. Know their triggers and how to help them-** Your child needs to know that you're on their team. Advocate for them and be willing to help them through stressful situations.
- 9. Know that recovery will occur over time and will not happen overnight** –Mental health issues can be extremely complex and recovery can take anything from a few days to months to years. In some cases, the illness may be lifelong but coping strategies and/or medication can be used to manage it.
- 10. Don't be afraid to seek advice from mental health professionals** – Please don't be afraid to seek help or advice from mental health professionals. They have a vast amount of experience in dealing with people suffering from mental health issues and are an excellent source to get help and advice from. There are also support groups available for parents, guardians and carers to help deal with the whole situation, such as, carer support groups.