

Professional Support

FAMILY CRISIS EDUCATION SERVICES



A Guide for Parents

It can be challenging to tell the difference between challenging behaviors and emotions and natural experiences in a child's development. In general, consider seeking help if your child's behavior persists for a few weeks or longer, causes distress for your child or your family, or interferes or interferes with your child's functioning at school, at home, or with friends.

How You Can Help:

Knowing when to get treatment for a mental health concern is important for parents and families. Parents are often the first to suspect that their child or teen is challenged by feelings, behaviors, or environmental conditions that cause them to act disruptive, rebellious, or sad. This may include problems with:

- Relationships
- School
- Sleeping
- Eating
- Substance abuse
- Emotional expression
- Coping
- Attentiveness
- Responsiveness

If you are concerned about your child's mental health, you can start by talking with other adults who frequently interact with your child, such as the child's teacher, gain more insight into behaviors shown at school.

Behaviors to look for:

- Significant decline in school performance or poor grades, even though the child studies and tries hard to succeed.
- Little or no interest in activities previously enjoyed.
- Less interest in friends or family
- Problems with sleep (for instance, night terrors, nightmares, insomnia, or sleeping too much)
- Hyperactivity
- Continuous or frequent aggression or acting out (for longer than 6 months)
- Continuous or frequent rebellion; opposition to authority and direction (for longer than 6 months)
- Refusal to go to school on a regular or frequent basis.
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Excessive, regular temper tantrums (without explanation)
- Self-injury
- Thoughts or talk of suicide. Get help right away if your child has plans to hurt themselves or others.

Seeking Services

- You can get referrals from your family doctor or local Mental Health America office (which also may provide mental health care services) and crisis centers. Consider getting a few names, so you can interview more than one person before choosing a provider.
- Your insurance company can provide a list of providers who are in your plan.
- Your local health department's mental health division or community mental health center provides free or low-cost treatment and services on a sliding scale. These services are state funded and are obligated to first serve individuals who meet "priority population criteria" as defined by the state Mental Health Department.