



Do you work with children? If yes, how do you know if they are mentally healthy? According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2017), mental health includes “our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.” It is important at every stage of life and early intervention, when needed, can make a tremendous difference in transforming children’s lives.

Be READY to change what and how we think about mental health. Start by learning more about it.

- “One in five children suffers from a mental health or learning disorder, and 80% of chronic mental disorders begin in childhood” (Child Mind Institute, 2016). There is an urgent need to identify the signs of these conditions early in life if children are to get the care and support they need to thrive.
- Read the report on the state of [children’s mental health across America](#) by the Child Mind Institute and share it with your school administrators and board members. “Schools present an important opportunity for recognizing early signs of mental health problems in children. K-12 enrollment in the United States is around 55 million (Merikangas et al., 2010), providing our best chance to reach the 17.1 million young people who will be affected by mental health disorders before the age of 18” (NCES, 2015; Child Mind Institute, 2016).

SET a course of ACTION by taking the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) course.

- The [YMHFA](#) training is designed to teach parents, school personnel, and caring citizens how to understand, identify, and respond to a youth who is experiencing signs of a mental health challenge or crisis.
- Similar to how CPR can save lives, research has shown that [Mental Health First Aid](#) successfully increases help provided to someone with mental health issues, offers guidance on how to obtain professional help, and improves concordance with health professionals about treatment (Mental Health First Aid Efficacy: A Compilation of Research Efforts, 2015).

To learn more about mental health, find support, and get involved in national or local advocacy activities, GO to:

- **Web sites on mental health:**
 - The [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#). To participate in activities during the month of May, [National Mental Health Month](#), which includes Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week (May 3-9).
 - [The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#). Participate in National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day on May 4 by organizing a viewing party, leading a small group discussion, or hosting a community-level forum.
 - [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). The site has information about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Results of the groundbreaking ACE study conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997, suggested that childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a large impact on lifelong health and opportunity. In particular, those children who experience multiple adversities are more

likely to have chronic health conditions, risky health behaviors, and lower life potential. For a short “Primer on ACEs” video, go to vimeo.com.

- **Resources on the concept of trauma and trauma-informed care:**
 - [SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#) document offers a framework for how an organization, system, or service sector can become trauma-informed.
 - [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) and Trauma-Informed Care \(TIC\): Critical Insights for Navigating School Health](#).
 - Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services: [Trauma Informed Care](#).
- **Documentaries on youth mental health:**
 - Paper Tigers highlights the questions, What does it mean to be a trauma-informed school? And how do you educate teens whose childhood experiences have left them with a brain and body ill-suited to learn? This film follows six students through a year in America’s first trauma-informed high school. Visiting [Paper Tigers](#).
 - Resilience, chronicles how trailblazers in pediatrics, education, and social welfare are using cutting-edge science and field-tested therapies to protect children from the insidious effects of toxic stress. Visiting [Resilience](#).
 - CAREgivers looks at the question: How is the professional care provider affected emotionally and physically, and who helps him or her? [CAREgivers which can be accessed here](#).

References

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- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for [Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#). (2015). Digest of Education Statistics.
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2017). [What is Mental Health?](#)
- U.S. Department of [Health & Human Service](#). Let’s talk about it.

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