



THE EARLY
WARNING SIGNS OF

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

FOR PARENTS



The Anoka-Hennepin School District is committed to maximizing opportunities for early identification of students at risk for mental health issues. Parents/guardians and other family members are often the first to notice the early warning signs of mental health issues.

The following list of early warning signs is organized by broad child and adolescent age groups. They are presented to offer a list of warning signs that may warrant follow up. Remember, the signs usually aren't one-time occurrences; they persist over several weeks. If problems persist over an extended period of time and especially if others involved in the child's life are concerned, consultation with your child's teacher, school support staff or health care provider.

This list of warning signs is not all inclusive and is not intended for the purposes of diagnosis or as medical advice. It is a reference guide.

HOW CAN I GET HELP FOR MY CHILD?

Talk to your family health care provider, your child's teacher or school support staff, or county children's mental health services.

Anoka County 763-712-2722

www.co.anoka.mn.us

Enter "children's mental health" in the site search bar.

Hennepin County 612-348-4111

www.hennepin.us

Enter "children's mental health" in the site search bar.

For more information about
child/adolescent mental health please visit:
www.anoka.k12.mn.us/mentalhealth



ANOKA-HENNEPIN
SCHOOLS
A future without limits

If requested, this newsletter will be provided in an alternative format for individuals with disabilities or in another language for individuals whose primary language is not English. A minimum of three days notice is needed. Please call the Family Welcome Center at 763-506-7928 to request an alternate format or language.

April 2014

PSYCHOLOGISTS
NEGATIVE
ANXIETY DISORDERS
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
COUNSELORS
SOCIAL ANXIETY
PANIC ATTACK
STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF
AGGRESSION
HYPERACTIVITY
HEALTH

HELP
PAIN
DEPRESSION
EMOTIONS
SOCIAL WORKERS
CHEMICAL HEALTH
SCHOOL NURSE
NIGHTMARES
TEMPER TANTRUM
COMMUNICATION
MENTAL ILLNESS
SAD

SUPPORT
MOOD SWINGS

THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Lethargic or apathetic, cries a lot and is irritable or anxious.
- Repeated nightmares, night terrors, unusual fear of the dark; fear of toileting alone, and other new fears.
- Doesn't seek or resists comforting.
- Has difficulty following instructions; motor skills lag behind others of same age; may rarely speak or carry on conversation; unable to comprehend danger.
- Changes in sleeping, eating or toileting behaviors that last a long time.
- Avoids eye contact; unable to sit and listen; increased social withdrawal; difficulty with non-verbal communication.
- Increased outbursts of anger, repetitive movements, aggression to others, fussiness or tantrums that seem excessive.
- Easily over-stimulated and hard to soothe.
- Sensitivity to clothing, sounds, lights, touch, smells or shoes; limited diet because of texture.

Source: CommUNITY Project. (2014, February). *Early Childhood*. Retrieved from Minnesota Mental Health: <http://mnmentalhealth.org>.

YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Marked fall in school performance.
- Poor grades in school despite trying very hard.
- Severe worry or anxiety, as shown by regular refusal to go to school, go to sleep or take part in activities that are normal for the child's age.
- Frequent physical complaints.
- Hyperactivity, fidgeting, constant movement beyond regular playing with or without difficulty paying attention.
- Persistent nightmares.
- Persistent disobedience or aggression (longer than 6 months) and provocative opposition to authority figures.
- Frequent, unexplainable temper tantrums.
- Threatens to harm or kill oneself.

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2011, March). Facts for Families. *When to seek help for your child*. Washington, DC: AACAP.

PRE-ADOLESCENTS AND ADOLESCENTS

- Marked decline in school performance.
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities.
- Marked changes in sleeping and/or eating habits.
- Extreme difficulties in concentrating that get in the way at school or at home.
- Sexual acting out.
- Depression shown by sustained, prolonged negative mood and attitude, often accompanied by poor appetite, difficulty sleeping or thoughts of death.
- Severe mood swings.
- Strong worries or anxieties that get in the way of daily life, such as at school or socializing.
- Repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Intense fear of becoming obese with no relationship to actual body weight; excessive dieting, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight.
- Persistent nightmares.
- Threats of self-harm or harm to others.
- Self-injury or self-destructive behavior.
- Frequent outbursts of anger, aggression.
- Repeated threats to run away.
- Aggressive or non-aggressive consistent violation of rights of others; opposition to authority, truancy, thefts, or vandalism.
- Strange thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or unusual behaviors.

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2011, March). Facts for Families. *When to seek help for your child*. Washington, DC: AACAP.