Your Child's Mental Health

Is it Misbehavior or a Sign of a Mental Health Condition?

A mental health condition affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood. These conditions deeply impact day to day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others.

Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be the signs of a mental health condition isn't always easy, especially at different ages of development. Consider the following information to determine if you should seek extra help and resources.

Early Intervention Can Make a Big Difference

A trained mental health provider can help teach your child coping skills to help their emotional and social skill development.

Who to Call During a Mental Health Crisis:

211

211 Wisconsin

Food, shelter, and natural disaster relief, agency or organization referral, crisis intervention, alcohol or drug recovery

988

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Thoughts of suicide, emotional distress, substance use crisis intervention

911

Medical & Public Safety Emergencies

Fire, crime, medical emergency intervention, disaster response

All services available 24/7/365

Additional Resources

- Well Badger
- Change the Ending
- NAMI Washington or Ozaukee County
- Mental Health America of Wisconsin

Common Signs to Look for Include:

Elementary Aged Students

- Frequent tantrums
- Talk of fears or worries, nightmares, stomachaches, or headaches
- Constant motion and cannot sit quietly
- Sleep too much or too little
- Not interested in playing with other children or have difficulty making friends
- Struggle with grades or have experienced a recent decline in grades

Middle & High School Students

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Experiencing delusions or hallucinations
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Self-harm and/or thoughts of suicide

* Symptoms may look similar or extend across age groups

Accessing Mental Health Services

WASHINGTON OZAUKEE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

1 I'm worried about my child. I notice...

Sleeping Issues
Irritability
Anxiety
Sadness
Outbursts
Always Alert
Isolation
Mood Swings
Anger
Poor Grades
Difficulty Concentrating

2 Who can help us?

Contact a trusted provider such as:

- Doctor or Primary Care Provider
- School Counselor or Teacher
- Community Therapist

Ask for a *mental health assessment*.
Be descriptive about your concerns.

Health insurance helps pay for needed services and can also help you find a therapist or provider but you do not need insurance to get services.

3 Therapy for emotional support.

There are many different types of therapy and every therapist is different. Look for a provider who meets your preference of gender, race, or culture. **Find someone who you and your child feels comfortable with. When you call, ask:**

1. Are you accepting new patients?
2. Do you accept my insurance?
   Do you accept self-pay or sliding scale payment?
3. When is the next available appointment?
4. What are the next steps I can take right now?

It's okay to call another clinic and ask these same questions. You may get in sooner with another provider.

4 What does therapy look like?

You and your child will learn new skills and talk about experiences, mood, or behavior. **Parents are involved by**:

- Meeting with the therapist regularly
- Enhancing skills to support your child
- Speaking up for your child and family
- Taking care of yourself and finding the support you need

Healing is a journey