

For Parents & Caregivers Concerned about Mental Illness

As a parent or caregiver, you want the best for your children or other dependents. You may be concerned or have questions about certain behaviors they exhibit and how to ensure they get appropriate help. We wanted to give you some information to help with any concerns you have or may arise.

What To Look For

It is important to be aware of warning signs that your child may be struggling. You can play a critical role in knowing when your child may need help. Consult with a school counselor, school social worker, school nurse, a community mental health provider, pediatrician or another health care professional if your child shows one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks.
- Extreme isolation and refusal to engage in daily activities.
- Seriously trying to harm or kill himself/herself, or making plans to do so.
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing.
- Getting into fights or wanting to hurt others.
- Showing out of control behavior that can hurt themselves or others.
- Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to make themselves lose weight.
- Having intense worries or fear that get in the way of daily activities.
- Extreme difficulty controlling behaviors, putting themselves in physical danger or causing problems in school or in the community.
- Using drugs and/or alcohol.
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problem in interpersonal relationships. Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality.
- Significant decline in grades or ability to cope with normal daily stress.

Because teens often can't understand very difficult situations on their own, you should pay close attention if they experience:

- Loss of a loved one.
- Divorce/Separation of parents.
- Any major transition like a move to a new home, new school.
- Being the target of teasing or bullying.
- Difficulties in school or with classmates. (Not making friends)
- A break up with a boyfriend, girlfriend or best friend.
- Traumatic life experience like living through a natural disaster, an accident or a victim/witness of a crime.

What To Do

If you are concerned about your child's behavior, it is important to secure appropriate care. You should:

- Talk to your child's doctor, school counselor, school social worker or any other mental health provider and seek further information.
- Ask your child's doctor if your child needs further evaluation and follow their recommendation.
- If your child already has mental health providers contact them immediately to inform them of your current concerns.

How To Talk To Your Teen About Mental Health

The teen years are difficult, as it is common that teens begin to be more private about their personal life. It is possible that with a busy family life, talking to your teen may not occur as frequently as you'd like. It is extremely important to keep the lines of communication open, especially during the teen years.

Asking Questions-Leading Statements

If you need help starting a conversation about mental health, listen carefully and actively and try leading with these:

- I have noticed (be direct as to what your concerns are).
- I'm worried about your safety. Do you have thoughts of hurting yourself? Do you have thoughts of killing yourself-dying?
- How are you feeling?
- Tell me more about what is happening.
- Sometimes you need an adult you can talk to. I'm here to listen.
- How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you might want to talk to someone else about your problem?

When Talking To Your Child:

-Communicate in a straightforward way.

Remain calm, non-judgmental, avoid being accusatory. (ex. You are not going to do anything stupid, right?)

- Speak at a level that is appropriate to your child's capacity and development.
- Maintain good eye contact, it shows interest and complete attention.
- Avoid distractions. Avoid answering the phone, doing other chores while talking with your teen.
- Discuss the topic when/where your child feels comfortable.
- Observe reactions during the discussion and slow down or back up to review if your child loses track, becomes confused or is upset.
- Listen actively and let your child speak freely about his/her feelings, worries and concerns.
- Ask directly about self-harm and suicide; if it is an issue seek help right away and remove any weapons or tools that can be used for self-harm.

Getting Help For Your Child

911 – Calling for emergency services should be your first call if your child has already hurt themselves and or is in a state that needs urgent and immediate assistance!

Mobile Crisis Services for Osceola County

When someone is in crisis, sometimes all he or she needs is a quick intervention to restore calm. Mobile Crisis Services are available to anyone ages 0-24 located in Orange, Osceola or Seminole County at the time of crisis. Master's level and licensed therapists will respond to anywhere within the tri-county area, within 60 minutes to provide immediate, on-site crisis stabilization. Crisis therapists also connect families to services and supports they need for long-term recovery. Services are FREE and available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, including holidays!

Someone needing crisis services might be:

- Out of control emotionally.
- Threatening to harm themselves or others.
- Exhibiting explosive or dangerous behaviors.
- In need of immediate mental health stabilization.
- In need of immediate substance abuse evaluation.
- Struggling with sadness or depression.

DIAL 211 or (407) 839-HELP

Text 898-211 include your zip code and “requesting mobile crisis” in your text message.

Chat: www.HFUW.org

Evaluations/Crisis Stabilization Hospitals for Osceola County

If your child is in need of emergency mental health services, you can find help also at local hospitals with a Crisis Stabilization services.



Address: 206 Park Pl Blvd, Kissimmee, FL 34741

Hours: 24 Hours

Phone: (407) 846-0023

1-844-943-7348 Main Number

University Behavioral Center



Address: 2500 Discovery Dr, Orlando, FL 32826

Hours: Open 24 hours

Phone: (407) 281-7000

Central Florida Behavioral Hospital



Address: 6601 Central Florida Pkwy, Orlando, FL 32821

Hours: Open 24 hours

Phone: (407) 370-0111