



Youth Mental Health

Resources for Students & Families



Facts & Data

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that, from 2016-19, approximately 5.8 million children aged 3-17 in the U.S. had ever been diagnosed with anxiety, and approximately 2.7 million had ever been diagnosed with depression.

Mental health needs show a correlation between equitable academic experiences. 42.2% of Washington 10th graders who reported symptoms of depression were getting grades mostly Cs, Ds, or F.s according to HYS results in 2023. This is a 7% increase from 2021.

Among Washington students in grade 12, 67% reported feeling nervous or anxious in the prior two weeks, according to HYS results from 2023.

HYS results showed, in 2023, 27% of 8th graders in our state felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped doing their usual activities.

Action Items

- Be aware of the signs of mental health challenges in children and teens. These signs include difficulty with routine tasks, personality changes, irritability, impaired sleep, changes in appetite, and/or substance use.
- Have frequent and honest conversations about stress, mental health, and self-care.
- Support resilience in children and teens. We build resilience by learning to be flexible and adapt to change, having strong connections and relationships with others, and feeling a sense of purpose and hope for the future.
- Bond with children by doing activities together, such as reading, playing outside, or cooking.
- Model activities to decrease stress. Parents, guardians, and other caregivers should prioritize their own mental health in order to take care of their families.
- Contact the 988 Lifeline for immediate mental health support. The crisis line is free, confidential, and available 24/7/365.

Conversation Starters

- What makes you feel happy? What makes you feel sad or scared?
- What makes you feel angry? What helps you to calm down?
- Just like we need to take care of our bodies with good food and movement, we also need to take care of our mental health. What do you do that helps with your mental health?
- I have noticed a change in your behavior. Can you tell me more about what's happening? How are you feeling?
- Sometimes you need to talk to an adult about your feelings. I'm here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?
- I'm worried about your safety. Can you tell me if you have thoughts of harming yourself or others?

Additional Resources

- [Children's Mental Health](#): The CDC provides information about child development, symptoms of mental health issues and treatment options, and data and statistics.
- [Mental Health Primers](#): These resources from the American Psychological Association help teachers identify behaviors in the classroom that are symptomatic of mental health issues.
- [Facts for Families](#): The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry provides an A-Z guide about issues that affect children and their families.
- [How to talk to your child about their mental health](#): This article from the Seattle Times features tips from experts for parents, guardians, and caregivers.
- [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families](#): The Washington State Department of Health provides resources for supporting children and teens during the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters.
- [Start Talking Now](#): This resource, funded by the Washington State Health Care Authority, provides information on preventing alcohol and marijuana use in children and teens.

