Parents' Guide

To Youth Mental Health

A NAMI Missouri Publication



Table of Contents

The Purpose of This Document 3

How You Can Support Your Youth's Mental Health 4-5

Resources

- Crisis Resources 6
- Trained Peer Support 7
- Parent and Caregiver Resources 8
- Resources for Military Families 9

Frequently Asked Questions 10

Youth Resources 11



Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to provide information for families whose youth are experiencing behavioral and/or mental health concerns. We encourage you review this guide and make notes about questions or concerns you have. Then bring this guide with you when you speak to your child's school support staff, primary care provider, or therapist. This guide is for you, the parent. The last page is for your child. Talk to them about the resources available on the last page and make sure they know where they can go for help and support.

About NAMI Missouri

NAMI Missouri is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, founded in 1985 to provide education, support, and advocacy for individuals living with mental illness and their family members. We are the chartered statewide organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness with nine affiliate chapters in Missouri.

About the Missouri Department of Mental Health

The Missouri Department of Mental Health is the cabinet-level state mental health agency. The Department has three principal missions established in state law: (1) the prevention of mental disorders, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and compulsive gambling; (2) the treatment, habilitation, and rehabilitation of Missourians who have those conditions; and (3) the improvement of public understanding and attitudes about mental disorders, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and compulsive gambling.

Special Thanks

NAMI Missouri would like to thank NAMI Nevada. Their original Parent's Guide was the inspiration for this document, and we appreciate their generosity in allowing us to use the language and resources included in their original guide.



How You Can Support Your Youth's Mental Health

Excerpt from ***Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory 2021***

Be the best role model you can be for young people by taking care of your own mental and physical health.

Young people often learn behaviors and habits from what they see around them. You can model good habits by talking to children about the importance of mental health, seeking help when you need it, and showing positive ways you deal with stress so children learn from you. Additional ways to take care of your own mental health include taking breaks, getting enough sleep, exercising, eating balanced meals, maintaining regular routines, obtaining health insurance coverage, staying connected with family and friends, and taking time to unplug from technology or social media.

Help children and youth develop strong, safe, and stable relationships with you and other supportive adults.

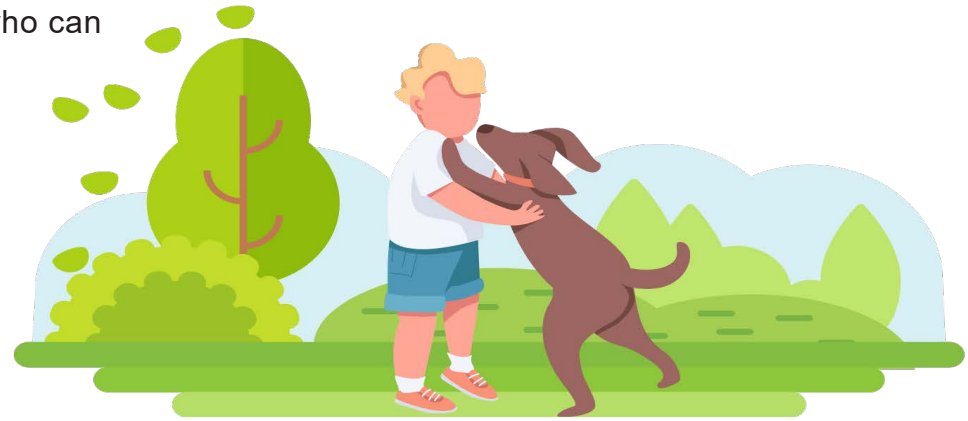
Research shows that the most important thing a youth needs to be resilient is a stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult. Spend time with children on activities that are meaningful to them, show them love and acceptance, praise them for the things they do well, listen to them, and communicate openly about their feelings. Encourage children to ask for help and connect them with other adults who can serve as mentors.

Encourage children and youth to build healthy social relationships with peers.

This can be done through self-directed play and structured activities such as school, after school programs, sports, and volunteering. Since peers can play a major role (both positive and negative) in children's development, it's important to help children learn how to deal with peer pressure. Have open conversations with your child about their values and teach them to be confident and comfortable in expressing their needs and boundaries.

Do your best to provide children and youth with supportive, stable, and predictable home and neighborhood environments.

A lot may be outside of your control, and there will be trial and error as you figure out what works best for your child. That said, try to help children stick to a regular and predictable daily schedule, such as regular dinnertime and bedtime. Be thoughtful about whether and how to discuss stressful topics such as financial and marital problems. It's also important to minimize children's exposure to violence, which puts them at risk of mental health and substance use challenges.



How You Can Support Your Youth's Mental Health

Try to minimize negative influences and behaviors in young people's lives.

Talk to children early about the risks of alcohol and other drugs, both short-term (such as car crashes and other accidents) and long-term (such as reduced cognitive abilities). The earlier a youth or adolescent begins using substances, the greater their chances of developing substance use problems. Mental health and substance use problems can also occur at the same time. For example, some young people struggling with stress or difficult feelings turn to alcohol or drug use. And alcohol and other drugs can also affect mental health, for example by altering mood or energy levels.

Ensure children and youth have regular checkups with a pediatrician, family doctor, or other health care professional.

Health care professionals can help you monitor your children's health, give you advice on how to prevent problems and diagnose and treat physical and mental illnesses. Obtaining health insurance coverage for your children can help. To learn more about enrolling in Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or a Marketplace plan, go to HealthCare.gov or InsureKidsNow.gov.

Minimize children's access to means of self-harm, including firearms and prescription medications.

Dispose of unused or expired prescriptions and keep medications out of reach of children and youth. If you choose to keep firearms in the home, ensure that they are stored safely: unloaded and locked up in a lock box or safe. Having firearms in the home increases the likelihood of firearms-related deaths. In fact, firearms are the most lethal means of suicide. 90% of attempted suicides with a firearm result in death, compared to less than 10% of attempted suicides overall.

Look out for warning signs of distress, and seek help when needed.

Signs of distress in children can show up in a number of ways, such as irritability, anger, withdrawal, and other changes in their thoughts, appearance, performance at school, sleeping or eating patterns, or other behaviors. If you notice concerning changes in your child, let them know you're there and ready to support them however they need. Don't be afraid to ask for help by talking to a doctor, nurse, or other professional or looking into other available resources in your community. For example, schools often have counseling services and accommodations for students enrolled in special education programs.

Be attentive to how children and youth spend time online.

Digital technology can help young people connect with friends and family, learn about current events, express themselves, and access telehealth and other resources. At the same time, children can have negative experiences online, such as being bullied, finding harmful information, and negatively comparing themselves to others.

Be a voice for mental health in your community.

There are many ways to do this, from talking openly with friends and family about the importance of mental health, to going to school board meetings or a town hall, to volunteering with an advocacy group, to promoting greater funding and awareness of mental health programs in schools and local organizations, such as churches, libraries, parks and recreation, or sports teams.

Crisis Resources

Immediate Crisis Resources

If your youth is experiencing an immediate crisis

Call 911 for emergency services

Go to the nearest hospital emergency room

Access Crisis Intervention Lines

Access Crisis Intervention (ACI) provides access to services for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. ACI will provide an opportunity for individuals to receive necessary behavioral health crisis services in an effort to reduce unnecessary interventions such as hospitalization or detentions. By calling the ACI hotline, individuals have access to behavioral health crisis services that are free and available to both youth and adults.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline Network is available 24/7 in English or Spanish.

Call or Text: 988
Visit: 988lifeline.org
Chat online: 988lifeline.org/chat
TTY Users: Dial 711 then 988

Ayuda En Español: Lifeline ofrece 24/7, servicios gratuitos en español, y no es necesario hablar inglés si usted necesita ayuda

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people. Services are available 24/7.

Call: 866-488-7386 | Text: START to 678678
Visit: thetrevorproject.org/get-help
Chat online: thetrevorproject.org/webchat

National Sexual Assault Hotline

Connect with a trained staff member from a sexual assault provider in your area that offers access to a range of free services. Free, confidential crisis support is available 24/7.

Call: 800-656-HOPE (4673) | Visit: hotline.rainn.org
Chat online: online.rainn.org | Spanish: rainn.org/es

Domestic Violence Hotline

Trained expert advocates are available 24/7 to provide confidential support to anyone experiencing domestic violence or seeking resources and information. Help is available in Spanish and other languages.

Call: 800-799-SAFE (7233) | Text: START to 88788
Visit: thehotline.org TTY Users: 800-787-3224

Disaster Distress Helpline

SAMHSA's National Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.

Call or Text: 800-985-5990
Visit: disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

Español: *Llama o envía un mensaje de texto 800-985-5990 presiona "2"*

Other languages: *issuu.com disasterdistresshelpline*

Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL Callers: *To connect to an agent in American Sign Language, visit disasterdistress.samhsa.gov and click the "ASL Now" button or call 800-985-5990 from your videophone.*

Courage2Report Missouri

Courage2Report Missouri empowers adults and youth to share information regarding dangerous or potentially dangerous situations in their schools and communities. C2R uses a "sooner is safer" 24/7 confidential tool for reporting real time concerns, including bullying, physical assault, weapons, human trafficking, planned school attacks or shootings, planned suicides, sexual offenses, extremism, and terrorist threats.

Call: 866-748-7047
Visit: Courage2ReportMO.com

Trained Peer Support

For those who face barriers or struggle to access mental health support for your family

NAMI Missouri

NAMI Missouri is a 501(c)(3) mental health non-profit organization founded in 1985 to provide education, support and advocacy on behalf of people with serious mental illness and their families.

Parent Helpline: The NAMI Missouri Parent Helpline is available M-F from 9 am to 5 pm to answer your questions about services, support and referrals. Call 800-374-2138 or email info@namimissouri.org.

NAMI Basics Education Program: NAMI Basics is a free education program for parents and family caregivers of children and teens who are experiencing mental health conditions. The NAMI Basics course is free and is led by trained teachers who are the parent or other caregivers of children and youth who live with a mental health condition. The course consists of six classes, each lasting 2.5 hours.

NAMI Basics On Demand: NAMI Basics is available online as a self-paced course that is available 24/7. NAMI Basics On Demand offers the flexibility of participating in the course on your schedule and provides information, strategies and support.

NAMI Ending The Silence: Ending the Silence (ETS) is a free program for middle and high school students to learn about mental health conditions through a brief presentation, short videos, and personal testimony from a young adult. ETS is available in person or online at **ets.nami.org**.

Online: namimissouri.org
Call: 800-374-2138

Missouri Family to Family (UMKC):

Missouri Family to Family offers free, individualized and family-centered supports provided by family information specialists and trained family mentors for individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs, their families, and professionals who support them. Missouri Family to Family is part of the UMKC Institute for Human Development which is the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) for Missouri.

Online: mofamilytofamily.org
Call: 1-800-444-0821

Youth Peer Support (YPS)

A Youth Peer Support (YPS) Specialist connects with peers in their community to provide support, validation, and encouragement necessary for youth to effectively engage with their support systems during the transition to adulthood. To connect with Youth Peer Support, contact your local community behavioral health center.

Family Support Provider (FSP)

A Family Support Provider (FSP) is a parent or family member of a child or youth with behavioral and/or mental health concerns that has leadership and partnership skills that can be helpful to other families navigating the systems designed to serve them. To connect with a Family Support Provider, contact your local community behavioral health center.

ParentLink

ParentLink is your connection to parenting, caregiving, and family supports. Expert problem-solving support, helpful evidence-based information, assistance in obtaining benefits and services, and connection to vetted services and supports that are right for you. ParentLink is for all Missouri families, providing free assistance for the entire family from highly qualified professionals. ParentLink also offers parent to parent peer support through their parent helpline and kinship foster care support groups.

Parent Helpline: 800-552-8852 or 800-546-4543
Website: education.missouri.edu/parentlink

Missouri Parents Act (MPACT)

MPACT is Missouri's only Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center, providing services to parents, children, and young adults to support educational goals by empowering youth and families to advocate for themselves through support, training, and education. Free services include, over 30 in-person and online trainings for parents, youth, staff, and other professionals; direct support to families throughout the special education process; information about how to work with schools and communities; fact sheets; model forms; and sample letters, including resources on mental health.

Online: missouriparentsact.org
Call: 800-743-7634

Parent and Caregiver Resources

How to Find Mental Health Treatment for Your Child

Talk to a social worker or a counselor at your child's school.

Contact your insurance company for a list of covered providers who work with children and youth.

Talk with your child's pediatrician or primary care physician and ask if they are enrolled in continuing education and support in youth psychiatric services like MO-CPAP (see below).

Missouri Child Psychiatry Access Project

MO-CPAP can provide expert support to your child's health care provider for behavioral and mental health care challenges. Your provider can call and receive same day advice from a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. Ask your child's primary health care provider if they're enrolled in MO-CPAP.

Email: umhspsymo-cpap@heal.missouri.edu
Online: medicine.missouri.edu/mo-cpap

Missouri Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices

The Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities provides services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Service eligibility also requires the disability to have serious impact on multiple areas of functioning.

Online: www.dmh.mo.gov/dev-disabilities
Call: 800-207-9329

United Way 211

United Way 2-1-1 provides free and confidential health and community service information, available 24/7 to help individuals connect with local resources.

Call: 211
Online: www.211unitedway.org

Easterseals Midwest

Easterseals offers resources to people and families living with disabilities. Home and community based services and supports are categorized into five distinct support areas: Live, Learn, Work, Play, and Act.

Online: easterseals.com/midwest
Call: 800-200-2119

Legal Aid of Missouri

There are four legal aid programs in Missouri, each servicing a portion of the counties in the state. Each legal aid program is an independent nonprofit corporation that provides legal assistance to the low-income and disadvantaged in Missouri. The four programs are Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Legal Aid of Western Missouri, Legal Services of Southern Missouri and Mid-Missouri Legal Services.

Online: www.lsmo.org

Missouri Protection and Advocacy

Missouri Protection and Advocacy is a non-profit public interest law firm with the mission of protecting legal rights of people with disabilities by providing advocacy and legal services.

Online: www.moadvocacy.org
Call: 800-392-8667



Resources for Military Families

NAMI Homefront Mental Health Resources for Military Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

This resource center contains information about mental health conditions, treatment options, effective strategies to help manage stress, tips to improve communication skills, approaches to increase overall wellness, where to access local crisis services and information and more.

Online: homefrontresources.nami.org

America's Little Helpers

The mission of "America's Little Helpers" is to provide the children of wounded and disabled veterans with resources, support, and outlets to help them cope and thrive while living with the effects of their parent's mental and physical war wounds.

Online: saluteheroes.org/americas-little-helpers

Blue Star Families of Missouri

Blue Star Families of Missouri empowers families to thrive as they serve. Programs include Blue Star Books, Blue Star Outdoors, Blue Star Spouse Careers, and Blue Star Welcome Programs.

Online: bluestarfam.org

Call: (573) 246-0406

Caregivers on the Homefront

Caregivers on the Homefront's mission is to provide family caregivers of our nation's veterans and first responders with hope, a sense of togetherness, and a firm foundation of resiliency through mental health and wellness programming for the caregiver and children. Programs include mental health and wellness restorative weekends, mental health counseling, educational workshops on suicide prevention and compassion fatigue, trauma groups, and teen to tween peer mentoring. Most services are free of charge. The organization also advocates to a national audience on the importance of holistically supporting the entire veteran family unit.

Online: caregivers-homefront.org

Seasame Street for Military Families

A collection of free games, apps, and PDFs to help parents talk, listen and connect with their children on a variety of topics including deployment, homecomings, relocation and routines.

Online: sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org



Frequently Asked Questions

I'm worried about my child's school performance, withdrawal from friends and activities, sleeping problems, or excessive fears or worries. What should I do?

While every child is unique and special, sometimes they encounter emotions, feelings or behavior that cause problems in their lives and the lives of those around them. Families often worry when their child or teenager has difficulty coping with things, feels sad, can't sleep, gets involved with drugs, or can't get along with family or friends. AACAP's Facts for Families provide up-to-date information on issues that affect children, teenagers, and their families. To learn more, visit **aacap.org**, then select "**Families/ Youth**" and click "**Facts for Families**."

Where can I learn more about medications used to treat mental health conditions in youth?

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) have developed Parents' Medication Guides to help individuals make informed decisions about treating mental disorders in children and adolescents. Find the guide online at **parentsmedguide.org**

Why is my child or teen engaging in self-harming behavior, like cutting?

Engaging in self-harm is an outward indicator of mental health distress being experienced by your youth or teen. For many, cutting or other self-harm is an attempt to interrupt strong emotions and pressures that seem impossible to tolerate. Most of the time, it's not a suicide attempt, but cutting and other forms of self-injury can be habit-forming, and many young people underestimate the risks of getting seriously sick or injured. Parents can help teens who harm themselves – the earlier, the better. Learn more at **KidsHealth.org**

These are some commonly asked questions on youth mental health. For further reading, visit the National Institute of Mental Health website on youth and mental health.

If my child might be suicidal, what are some safety precautions I can take?

If you suspect your child may be having thoughts of harming themselves or others, it is important to make your home safer to reduce the risk of harm, including securing all medications and weapons, especially firearms. For more information see the AACAP's resource guide, ***Suicide Safety: Precautions at Home***.

Will asking my youth if they feel suicidal encourage suicide attempts?

Talking about suicide provides the opportunity for communication. Fears shared are more likely to diminish. The first step in encouraging a person with thoughts of suicide to live comes from talking about those feelings. A simple inquiry about whether the person is intending to end their life can start the conversation. However, talking about suicide should be carefully managed. For more information go to **mentalhealthfirstaid.org**

What are common suicide warning signs that I should be aware of?

These signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has recently increased in frequency or intensity, and if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change.

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Using or increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Behaving reckelssly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Extreme mood swings

Tools for Youth

24/7 Crisis Text Line

Text 'NAMI' to 741741

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The Lifeline offers 24/7 free, confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

Call or Text: 988
Online: https://988lifeline.org

Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people.

Call: 866-488-7386
Text 'START' to 678-678
Chat online: thetrevorproject.org

OK2TALK.org

OK2Talk is a community where teens and young adults struggling with mental health conditions can find a safe place to talk about what they're experiencing.

Online: ok2talk.org

Stop Bullying

An online collection of videos, resources and articles about bullying and prevention for teens and parents.

Online: stopbullying.gov

Mental Health America

Where to Start: A Survival Guide

Mental Health America's new book, *Where to Start*, provides jargon-free, honest, reassuring information about common mental health conditions and how to find help.

mhanational.org

The Jed Foundation

A resource center for teens and parents with a variety of mental health topics. Includes a resource for talking with friends about mental health challenges.

Online: jedfoundation.org

Inspiring My Generation

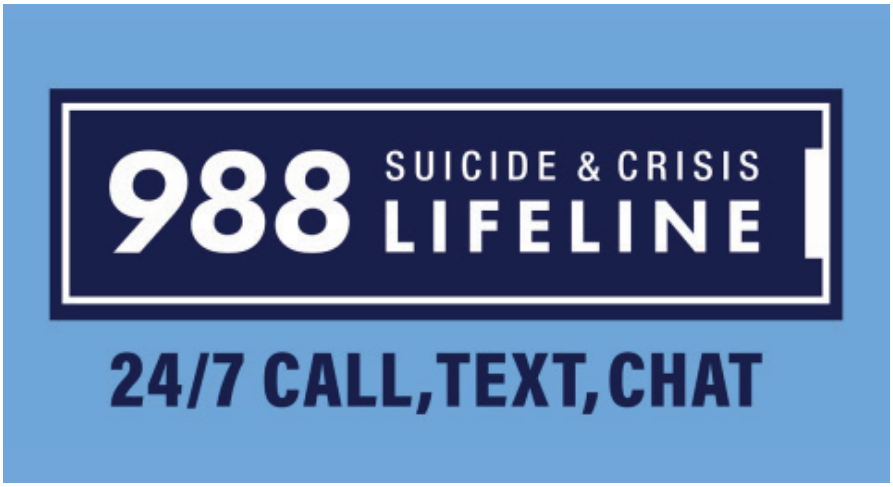
Inspiring My Generation's mission is to save lives through mental health awareness, early symptom detection, emotional support, and suicide prevention.

Online: inspiringmygeneration.org

Find Your Anchor

The Find Your Anchor movement is suicide prevention, awareness, and education. It creates a community of anchors with the help of some little blue boxes.

Online: findyouranchor.us







Missouri Department of
MENTAL HEALTH

NAMI Missouri
National Alliance on Mental Illness

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