

# CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!!!

## Know The Warning Signs

A variety of signs may point to a possible mental health problem or serious emotional disturbance in a child or adolescent.

### Pay attention if a child or adolescent you know:

#### Is Troubled By Feeling:

- Really sad and hopeless without good reason and the feelings don't go away
- Very angry most of the time, cries a lot or overreacts to things
- Worthless or guilty a lot
- Anxious or worried a lot more than other young people
- Unable to get over a loss or death of someone important
- Extremely fearful-has unexplained fears or more fears than most kids
- Constantly concerned about physical problems or physical appearance
- Frightened that his or her mind is controlled or is out of control

#### Experiences Big Changes:

- Does much worse in school
- Loses interest in things usually enjoyed
- Has unexplained changes in sleeping or eating
- Avoids friends or family and wants to be alone all the time
- Daydreams too much and can't get things done
- Feels life is too hard to handle or considers suicide
- Hears voices that cannot be explained

#### Is Limited By:

- Poor concentration-can't think straight or make up his or her mind
- Inability to sit still or focus
- Worry about being harmed, hurting others, or about doing something "bad"
- Need to wash, clean things, or perform routines hundreds of times a day to avoid danger
- Thoughts that race-almost too fast to follow
- Persistent nightmares

**Behaves In Ways That Cause Problems:**

- Uses alcohol or other drugs
- Eats large amounts of food then vomits, abuses laxatives, or takes enemas to avoid weight gain
- Continues to diet and/or exercise obsessively although bone thin
- Constantly violates rights of others or breaks the law without regard for others
- Does things that can be life threatening

If there is a concern about a child's or adolescent's mental health, it is important to get help as soon as possible.

**Contact:**

Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental health	<a href="http://www.iffcmh.org">www.iffcmh.org</a>
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health	<a href="http://www.ffcmh.org">www.ffcmh.org</a>
The National Mental Health Association	<a href="http://www.nmha.org">www.nmha.org</a>
National Mental Health Information Center	<a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org">www.mentalhealth.org</a>

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:**

- Every child's mental health is important
- Many children have mental health problems
- These problems are real, painful, and can be severe
- Mental health problems can be recognized and successfully treated
- By working together, caring families and communities can help