# Mental Health Training and Education

Student mental health is of critical importance. Mental health is comprised of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health influences an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and actions.

In the school setting, a student’s mental health affects their energy level and optimism, concentration, dependability, and performance; and determines how students handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including biological factors, life experiences such as trauma or abuse, and family history. There are several prevalent mental health disorders that present in students in the school setting: mood disorders (such as depression or bipolar disorder); anxiety disorders.; personality disorders; psychotic disorders (such as schizophrenia); eating disorders; trauma-related disorders (such as post-traumatic stress disorder); and substance use disorders. Unaddressed, these mental health issues can become emotionally, psychologically and socially disruptive and life-threatening. With help, however, individuals with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely. It is our goal that school faculty, staff, and students become educated about the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns, promote mental health wellness, provide support to reduce stigma and so students can obtain necessary help.

The following are resources to support staff training and education in the areas of **Mental Health Knowledge, Mental Health Promotion, Providing Support, and Reducing Stigma.**

1. **Mental Health Knowledge:**Learn about the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns and the appropriate treatments.

* [Common Mental Health Disorders in Adolescence](https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/mental-health/adolescent-mental-health-basics/common-disorders/index.html)
* [Mental Health Warning Signs](https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms)
* [Mental Health Conditions](https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions)
* [Supporting Student Mental Health: Resources to Prepare Educators](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/health/mhttc-educator-mental-health-literacy-resource.pdf) is a resource offered by Mental Health Technology and Transfer Center (MHTTC) that identifies several trainings and resources to increase educator mental health literacy, including online courses, websites, and workshops.
* [Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/) (eight hours). The goals of YMHFA are to increase mental health awareness, reduce stigma around mental health, help people at risk of self-harm or suicide, and refer them to helping professionals (a virtual training is being developed as well). The Council for Behavioral Health is also working on a virtual training. Local Community Services Boards (CSB) offer YMHFA free of charge to Virginia schools. You may also contact the Office of Behavioral Health Wellness at the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services for more information on Mental Health First Aid Trainings and trainings to be Trauma Informed at [gail.taylor@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:gail.taylor@dbhds.virginia.gov).
* [NAMI Ending the Silence for School Staff](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Ending-the-Silence) (one hour). The presentation for school staff is designed to be conducted by both a leader and a young adult with a mental health condition who details their experience. The presentation includes information about signs and symptoms, approaching students, and working with families, while allowing time for questions and dialogue. Your [local NAMI affiliate](https://www.nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI) offers this presentation free of charge to schools.
* [Kognito At-Risk for Educators](https://kognito.com/products) (one hour). The virtual format allows for role-play simulations developed for elementary, middle, and high school educators that aim to increase knowledge about children’s mental health. The platform is customizable to include a local list of mental health resources. There is a charge for this platform.
* [Classroom Mental Health](https://classroommentalhealth.org/) (varies). This website aims to be a guide for teachers starting from when they notice mental health concerns or are approached by a student for support. The site addresses common concerns (e.g., Can I help? Should I help?) and provides resources for improving classroom atmosphere and exercises for teachers. This website is free.
* [Notice.Talk.Act (American Psychiatric Foundation)](https://apafdn.org/impact/schools/typical-or-troubled) **teaches about warning signs (NOTICE**); how to **TALK**About Mental Health; and how to **ACT** appropriately in referring students to resources. The program involves an E-Learning Module (30-40 mins); Classroom Module Designed to be Tailor to your School; Online Assessments; and 18-months of Learning with New Courses based on your Schools Assessments.
* [For Educators | MentalHealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/educators) – the US Department of Health and Human Services provides information on what educators should know, look for, and do.

1. **Mental Health Promotion:**Promote positive mental health in the classroom and across the whole school.

* The Mental Health Technology and Transfer Center (MHTTC) has developed [Supporting Student Mental Health: Resources to Prepare Educators](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/health/mhttc-educator-mental-health-literacy-resource.pdf), which identifies several trainings and resources to increase educator mental health literacy, including online courses, websites, and workshops.
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* [CDC Healthy Schools](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/healthybehaviors.htm) provides numerous resources on promoting healthy behaviors through the use of the Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community model/
* [Mental Health Promotion in Schools](https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyschools/docs/Mental_Health_Promotion.pdf) provides tips for school integration of mental health promotion.
* [Promoting Student Mental Health through SEL](https://www.cfchildren.org/blog/2015/01/promoting-mental-health-through-sel/) Social emotional learning is critical for student mental health. [Health Smart Virginia](https://healthsmartva.org/) provides numerous lessons and resources to support school health, including social emotional health and prevention of substance misuse.

1. **Providing Support:**Identify students in need of support and link them to appropriate services and supporting students with mental health problems at school.

* [Common Mental Health Disorders in Adolescence](https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/mental-health/adolescent-mental-health-basics/common-disorders/index.html)
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* [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools program](https://cbitsprogram.org/) is a school-based, group and individual intervention.  It is designed to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and behavioral problems, and to improve functioning, grades and attendance, peer and parent support, and coping skills. CBITS has been used with students from 5th grade through 12th grade who have witnessed or experienced traumatic life events such as community and school violence, accidents and injuries, physical abuse and domestic violence, and natural and man-made disasters. CBITS uses cognitive-behavioral techniques (e.g., psychoeducation, relaxation, social problem solving, cognitive restructuring, and exposure).
* [For Educators | MentalHealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/educators) – the US Department of Health and Human Services provides information on what educators should know, look for, and do.
* [Partnership to End Addiction Virtual Recovery Resources for Families](https://drugfree.org/covid-19-were-here-for-you/) and [SAMHSA Virtual Recovery Resources List](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf) and [Resources to Support Adolescent Mental Health](https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/mental-health/how-adults-can-support-adolescent-mental-health/resources/index.html)

1. **Reducing Stigma:** Improve attitudes about mental health and mental illness across students and school staff and provide support in ways that do not increase stigma.

* [Mental health: Overcoming the stigma of mental illness](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/mental-health/art-20046477) - this article by the Mayo Clinic outlines the harmful effects of stigma and offers steps to address stigma.
* [NAMI Ending the Silence for School Staff](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Ending-the-Silence) (one hour). The National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI) provides numerous anti-stigma resources in addition to this presentation. The presentation for school staff is designed to be conducted by both a leader and a young adult with a mental health condition who details their experience. The presentation includes information about signs and symptoms, approaching students, and working with families, while allowing time for questions and dialogue. Your [local NAMI affiliate](https://www.nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI) offers this presentation free of charge to schools.
* The [Make It OK](https://makeitok.org/) campaign aims to eliminate stigma and encourage talking about mental health.
* [Mental Health 101- Understanding Stigma](https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/addressing-stigma) is a free 20-minute tutorial offered by the Center for Addiction and Mental Health.
* [Break the Stigma](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49mfPFTZsHs) - a video by the Children’s Hospital of Colorado that suggests ways to break stigma and give support.
* [Changing the Culture on Mental Illness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOJf_JrPpVA) provides insight into the value of school-based initiatives to take away shame and stigma and promote help for students
* [The Stigma of Mental Illness | Sam Cohen | TEDxYouth@SRDS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUlBZuQ2c0Q) – a TED Talk given by a high school sophomore that “implores us to treat mental illnesses as the illnesses that they are, and to move forward as a culture in an accepting and nurturing way in treating these illnesses. In her talk, she explores what it means to be mentally ill in our society.”