



THE FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH



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National Children's Mental Health

Awareness Week!

The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health declares the first full week in May as National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. This week is dedicated to increasing public awareness about the triumphs and challenges in children's mental health and emphasizing the importance of family and youth involvement in the children's mental health movement!

The theme for 2012 National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week is:

"Youth Overcoming Trauma"

The National Federation invites all our chapters and statewide organizations to use this week to promote positive mental health, well-being and social development for all children and youth. Join the National Federation in sending out the following messages:

- Mental health is essential to overall health and well being.
- Serious emotional and mental health disorders in children and youth are real and treatable.
- Children and youth with mental health challenges and their families deserve access to services and supports that are family driven, youth guided and culturally appropriate.
- Values of acceptance, dignity and social inclusion should be promoted throughout all communities for children, youth and families.
- Family and youth voice is a valued asset in determining appropriate services and interventions.

Children's Mental Health Disorders

• About 1 in 5 American children suffer from a diagnosable mental illness during a given year. Nearly 5 million American children and adolescents suffer from a serious mental illness (one that significantly interferes with their day-to-day life). Some of the major mental illnesses and behavioral disorders that affect children are:

Anxiety disorders - Children have fears that adults often don't understand, but when they persist or when they begin to interfere with a child's normal daily routine, he or she may have a diagnosable and treatable anxiety disorder.

Depression - Studies of children aged six to 12 have shown that as many as one in 10 suffer from the illness of depression. These children cannot escape their feelings of sadness for long periods of time.

Attention-Deficit Disorders (ADD) - This condition affects a child's ability to concentrate, to learn and to maintain a normal level of activity. Attention-deficit disorder affects from three to 10 percent of all children in America. Thought to be 10 times more common in boys than in girls, this disorder often develops before the age of seven but is most often diagnosed when the child is between ages eight and ten.

Bipolar - This illness involves persistent feelings of sadness and/or rapidly changing moods. Feelings of extreme well-being that are out of the ordinary or thoughts about suicide may be present.

Schizophrenia - This disorder involves distorted perceptions and thoughts. Children may have delusions and/or hallucinations and may hear voices or see things that are not there.

• Remember, all mental illnesses and behavioral disorders are treatable. In general, the earlier the diagnosis and treatment, the less severe the disease or disorder becomes. If you see symptoms that concern you contact your doctor. Along with treatment of a diagnosed mental illness or behavioral disorder, it is important to gain knowledge about your child's particular condition.

• Stigma strikes those affected by mental illness in almost all areas of life. Work to eliminate stigma every chance you can by sharing the fact that all mental illnesses are no-fault diseases.

If you are a parent, friend or professional concerned about a child or teen who may show signs of a mental illness or serious behavior disorder and need support, call the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health or your local chapter. You may also reach us online at www.ffcmh.org for information and resources in your state.

Building Resilience in Children and Youth Dealing with Trauma

Even from as young as 18 months, children can be affected by traumatic events and have serious problems later in childhood and adulthood. But the great news is that, with help from families, providers, and the community, children and youth can demonstrate resilience when dealing with trauma.

Traumatic experiences can range from a one-time incident, such as a sudden death of a loved one or a natural disaster, to ongoing exposure to experiences, such as bullying or family violence. Identifying that a child has experienced trauma is not always easy because emotional and behavioral responses to trauma vary depending on a child's age, personality, the type and severity of the incident, and availability of adult support.

Studies on stress response in children show that there can be physiological and structural changes in the brain and neurological systems and can, without intervention, result in enduring problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, hyperactivity, and substance abuse.

- More than 60% of youth age 17 and younger have been exposed to crime, violence and abuse either directly or indirectly.
- Young children exposed to 5 or more significant

adversities in the first 3 years of childhood face a 76 percent likelihood of having one or more delays in their cognitive, language, or emotional development.

- As the number of traumatic events abuse; suicide attempts; heart and liver diseases; pregnancy problems; high stress; uncontrollable anger; and family, financial, and job problems.

There is a range of behaviors that could be signs that a child is having difficulty dealing with a traumatic event, such as, but not limited to:

- Separation anxiety or clinginess towards teachers or caregivers
- Changes in appetite
- Decreased interest in and/or withdrawal from friends or family and normal activities
- Over- or under-reaction to physical contact, sudden movements, and sounds
- Angry outbursts and/or aggression
- More frequent complaints of headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue
- Repeatedly recreating the

event through comments, drawings, or activity

- Emotional “numbing,” or expressing no feelings at all about the event
- Drop in school performance

What can teachers, caregivers, and other adults do to help a child who has experienced trauma? The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers these suggestions:

- Maintain usual routines
- Make sure that the child is not being isolated
- Provide a safe place where the child can talk about the incident
- Be sensitive to potential environmental cues that may cause a reaction (e.g., an approaching storm or the anniversary of an event)
- Prepare the child in advance of a change in routine or other event that could be unsettling
- Monitor what information the child shares with other children to prevent excessive curiosity from peers

- Nurture the child's positive self-view
- Draw on cultural and familiar assets
- With the support of caring adults, children can recover from traumatic events, reestablish a sense of well-being, and obtain treatment and other services if needed.
- **The more you know about trauma and children, the more you can do to help them.** For more resources on early childhood and trauma, visit http://www.samhsa.gov/children/earlychildhood_trauma.asp.

SAMHSA Children



ND Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is a parent-run organization focused on the needs of children and youth with emotional, behavioral or mental disorders and their families.

Families Helping Families by providing:

- Support
- Advocacy
- Education



History of the ND Federation of Families

NDFFCMH has been providing parent support services and activities since 1994 throughout the state of North Dakota. NDFFCMH began with six families sharing similar concerns about their children's needs. These families wanted to ensure support and access to community-based services not only for their children but also for all children with emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders and their

families in North Dakota. NDFFCMH was incorporated May 4, 1994. During this time North Dakota applied for a major Federal Grant called North Dakota Partnerships Program. This program established a comprehensive system of care for children with a serious emotional disorder. The North Dakota Federation of Families Statewide Network Project was a major

component of Partnerships Program. The goal was to establish a parent organization, ND Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, to develop parent-to-parent support in North Dakota.



Children's Mental Health Week Event

Please join us in a Children's Mental Health awareness event. The Federation of Families will host a family pot luck and barn dance on Saturday May 5th at 1104 2nd Ave S. Fargo ND. The pot luck will begin at 5:30pm followed by the barn dance from 7pm – 9pm. The Ogg Creek String Band will provide live

entertainment, featuring old time music and dance calling. It is a great family event. Young and old alike join in on the fun! Hope to see you there!



Save the date:

The 2012 North Dakota Transition and Youth Leadership Conference

Nothing About Us Without Us

July 15-16, 2012 Radisson Hotel • Bismarck, ND

Featuring:

- Career Dash - Climb Theatre
- Education Panel - For all youth ages 14-26
- For Families & Professionals - Resource Roundup

Sponsors:

- ND Client Assistance Program
- Youth M.O.V.E. Beyond
- Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Family Voices of ND
- ND Department of Human Services
- Division of Children and Family Services
- **ND Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health**

For further information, contact Lyne Schumaker, 701-222-1223. Toll free: 1-800-484-2263, or ndffcmh.org.