

MENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

MCPS Best Practices for Parents & Families

OVERVIEW

A child's mental health and well-being are essential to their success in school and in life. Families play a critical role in creating safe, supportive, and nurturing environments where children feel valued, connected, and empowered to ask for help.

Children and young adults experience stress in different ways. By building strong relationships, maintaining open communication, and partnering with your child's school, families can help promote resilience, emotional well-being, and positive outcomes for every child.

Do

- **DO create consistent daily routines that include time for sleep, healthy meals, physical activity, homework, and family connection.**
- **DO talk with your child every day about school, friendships, feelings, and experiences. Listen without judgment and encourage open communication.**
- **DO recognize changes in your child's mood, behavior, sleep, appetite, attendance, or academic performance and seek support early when concerns arise.**
- **DO teach and model healthy coping skills such as problem-solving, deep breathing, physical activity, and taking breaks during stressful situations.**
- **DO partner with your child's teachers, school counselor, case manager, or administrator to address concerns and celebrate successes.**
- **DO encourage healthy technology habits by balancing screen time with family activities, outdoor play, reading, and social interactions.**
- **DO help your child identify trusted adults they can turn to at home, at school, and in the community.**
- **DO seek immediate assistance if your child expresses thoughts of self-harm, suicide, or harming others by contacting your school, healthcare provider, or emergency services.**

Don't

- **DON'T ignore persistent changes in your child's emotions or behavior.**
- **DON'T dismiss your child's worries or compare their experiences to others.**
- **DON'T wait until a problem becomes a crisis before reaching out for support.**
- **DON'T rely solely on social media or the internet for mental health advice without consulting qualified professionals.**
- **DON'T hesitate to contact your child's school if you have concerns about their emotional well-being or safety.**

CRISIS RESOURCES

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AN EMERGENCY

- **CALL 911**
- **CALL, TEXT, OR CHAT 988 FOR 24/7 FOR IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**
- **MD SAFE SCHOOLS HOTLINE 833-MD-B-SAFE**

MCPS RESOURCES

IF YOUR CHILD NEEDS SUPPORT AT SCHOOL, START BY

TALKING WITH:

- YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER
- CASE MANAGER (IF APPLICABLE)
- SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR
- SCHOOL COUNSELOR
- SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST



ASK FOR MCPS HELP