



ture This

Programs and Policies
Affecting Today's Families

Growing up doesn't only involve physical change, but also emotional and intellectual development. Mental health is how we think, feel and act during life. To achieve good mental health, children need to learn how to handle the many issues that are likely to occur in various stages of life.



Mental health issues for children vary day to day and place to place. Issues might include: losing a loved one; anger or fear - their own or others; new school; new home; new brother/sister; peer pressure; learning difficulties; lack of sleep; loss of self-esteem; lack of a caring environment; parents fighting; etc.

How children react, understand, and cope with these issues defines their mental health. Children handle situations differently and, as for any of us, will have good and bad days. Some are able to handle and cope with issues well. Others who can't may have difficulties concentrating in school, become depressed, hurt others or themselves, etc.

Family's Role

Families play a crucial role in identification and treatment of their children's mental health. Families should be aware of their children's activities and relationships. Whether it's in the car on the way to school or at the dinner table, parents should ask their children every now and then how they're feeling. Families can share observations with health care professionals and other caregivers to discuss and work out solutions. Families are children's best advocates and links to health care providers, teachers and others in their child's life.

The National Mental Health Association has a fact sheet for families "What Every Child Needs for Good Mental Health." The fact sheet describes a child's mental health and what families can do provide to ensure good mental health for their child. Visit www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/72.cfm

Children with Special Needs

For some children, emotional and behavioral issues are every day concerns. While origins of most special mental health needs are still unknown, some believe they are caused by elements in a child's surroundings or are genetic.

Families should be encouraged to be active partners with health care providers in helping their child. It takes team work to care for a child with mental health needs. Families and professionals should feel comfortable sharing with each other observations, resources, concerns about treatments, and ideas. The Family Village web site provides families disability-related

information and resources to help them better understand their child's condition. Visit www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/library.htm

Getting Involved

Mental Health is an issue that some communities don't address as much as they do physical health. The United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) has developed a national campaign - *Caring for Every Child's Mental Health* - to increase awareness of the importance of children's mental health. Families and groups can contact CMHS at (800) 789-2647 for campaign materials in English and Spanish (posters, videos, bookmarks, brochures, etc.) or visit www.mentalhealth.org/child/. Families can use CMHS' *Services Locator* to find resources in their state by visiting www.mentalhealth.org En español vaya a www.mentalhealth.org/espanol/

Resources

Kidshealth, a project of the Nemours Foundation, provides a web site for children and youth to turn to for information on health issues including dealing with feelings, bullying, and relationships. Children can visit www.kidshealth.org/kid/. En español vaya a www.kidshealth.org/kid/en_espanol/ Adolescents can visit www.teenshealth.org/ En español vaya a www.kidshealth.org/teen/en_espanol/index.html

The Federation for Families for Children's Mental Health is a parent-run advocacy organization providing families, information, resources, support, and links to others who address children's mental health. Visit www.ffcmh.org

Bright Futures - a national child health initiative -has recently developed a two-volume series on mental health. To view the series go to www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/index.html The second volume provides families and professionals helpful tip sheets covering various areas of mental health. Visit www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/pdf/tools.html#families

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has developed several fact sheets for families. Visit www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/index.htm. En español vaya a www.aacap.org/publications/apntsFam/index.htm ■

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With a Partners in Information and Communication (PIC) Cooperative Agreement from the MCH Bureau - DHHS, Family Voices is working to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health.

PICture This is a digest of articles and news clips to share with families, family organizations, and our professional partners to offer a flavor of activities going on in the maternal and child health (mch) community. We hope to encourage flourishing partnerships! ■

Partners...

Grantmakers In Health (GIH) is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to helping foundations and corporate giving programs to improve the nation's health. Its mission is to foster communication and collaboration among grantmakers and others, and to help strengthen the grantmaking community's knowledge, skills, and effectiveness.



GIH monitors the activities of health grantmakers by collecting basic information on foundations and corporate giving programs funding health initiatives and looks across the field to identify trends and emerging issues. From these findings, they develop newsletters highlighting new grants opportunities for the community and reports covering health issues that grantmakers fund. Report topics have included: oral health, early childhood, mental health, school-based health, etc. To view reports on line, visit www.gih.org/info-url2678/infourl_list.htm?attrib_id=3320

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Family Resource Corner

* **Healthfinder** provides information in English and Spanish on a variety of health issues. News, updates, and resources on health concerns are organized by topic and age, and are categorized for families and professionals. A child's site gives children the chance to play games related to health issues. Visit www.healthfinder.gov. En español vaya a www.healthfinder.gov/espanol.

* **National Institute of Mental Health** offers an extensive list of organizations and agencies that support families with mental health concerns. Resources are listed by topic, such as anxiety, depression, medications, etc. Visit www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/childresources.cfm.

* **International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation (ICGFI)** Food safety includes healthy food preparation. Bacteria in food is invisible and potentially harmful. Food irradiation can eliminate bacteria in meat, fruits, vegetables, eggs and spices. Approved by the FDA, food irradiation is the treatment of food with ionizing radiation, and has been practiced for several decades in the United States. More than 40 countries use the process. To keep food safe from bacteria, the International Food Information Council (IFIC) suggests that families wash hands regularly while cooking, separate raw and cooked foods, cook at proper temperatures, and refrigerate food properly. For more information, visit the ICGFI at www.iaea.or.at/icgfi or the IFIC at <http://ific.org>.

What's new in research?

Characteristics of Effective Mental Health Prevention Programs for Children



A study of school- and community-based prevention programs across the country found that collaborative, multi-year programs are more effective in helping children with mental health difficulties. Programs that emphasized education and constructive changes to the school and home environments, and those integrated with treatment systems, incurred more positive outcomes. See Greenberg, M.T., Domitrovich, C., and Bumbarger, B. (2001). *The prevention of mental disorders in school-aged children: current state of the field. Prevention and Treatment* 4(1). ■



Tidbits for the Month

National Nutrition Month The American Dietetic Association sponsors this nutrition education initiative to encourage families to make smart food choices. Want to see how much you know about healthy eating? Check out the "Start Today for a Healthy Tomorrow" Quiz to test your knowledge on the food pyramid and much more. Visit www.eatright.org/pr/2002/nnmquiz.html or the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

Dispelling Myths about Mental Retardation March 4-8 is Mental Retardation Awareness Week. Mental Retardation affects about 7 million people in the U.S. This weeklong recognition helps educate communities by recognizing the abilities of adults and children with mental retardation to live independent lives. It also calls for more thorough medical testing to assure fewer misdiagnoses. For more information, visit www.mentalhealth.org/highlights/march2002/retardation/.

National School Breakfast Week Scorecard The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) measures the participation of students in school breakfasts and rates states' performances on reaching low-income child populations. The program served over 6.5 million children last year. To view how your state measured up, visit www.frac.org/html/news/112701.html.



Highlights for the next
PICture This...

- **April is National Public Health Week**

Share your news with others!

We're always looking for news and activities about family organization and programs to post. Share exciting events and activities about your organization that will be interesting to others. Email Kathy Cruz Fernandez at kcruz@fcsn.org or fax at (617) 572-2094 with your tidbits. To subscribe to the newsletter email or call Kathy at (617) 236-7210 ■

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