

# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

| a manual for Baltimore youth

PREPARED BY THE: YOUTH PROGRAMMING ADVISORY COUNCIL AT NAMI METRO BALTIMORE

START HAVING CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER, TODAY.



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*Special thanks to everyone who contributed to the creation of this resource guide.*


# WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?



**Mental illness (also referred to as a mental health condition) is a condition that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others.**

**Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don't like to or are scared to talk about them.**

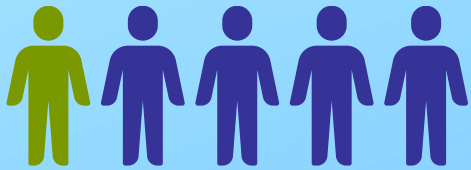
# WHAT IS STIGMA?



Mental health stigma refers to societal disapproval or the ways that society places shame on people who live with a mental illness or seek help for emotional distress, such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or PTSD.

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

Millions of youth and young adults are affected by mental illness each year, yet stigma and a lack of understanding around mental health conditions prevent people from speaking up and seeking help. According to the CDC, stigma can be defined as "discrimination against an identifiable group," such as people with a mental health condition.



1 out of 5 youth experience a mental health condition in a given year.

## 1/2

of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14.

## 17%

of high school students seriously consider suicide.

## 50%

of students 14+ with a mental health condition **drop out of high school.**



## 50-75%

of youth in juvenile justice systems experience a mental health condition.



## Only half

of children ages 8 - 15 with a mental health condition receive treatment, and often there are long delays between onset of symptoms and treatment.

## Suicide

 is the  
**2nd leading cause**

of death for people ages 15 - 24, and 90% of youth who die by suicide had one or more mental health conditions.



## A mental health condition isn't caused by just one thing or one factor.

Our genes, family, and childhood events/experiences can be some of the causes why people develop mental health conditions.

A stressful job or home life make some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too.

A mental health condition isn't your fault or your family's fault — these conditions develop for complicated reasons that researchers are only just starting to understand. But we do know a lot about how you can live well with a mental health condition. You have the power to improve your mental health. And it starts with one conversation.

## Mental illness is no one's fault.

# COMMON WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Now more than ever, it's important to look out for you and your friends' mental health. Below are some common warning signs to look for.

- 1 Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks
- 2 Seriously trying to harm oneself or making plans to do so
- 3 Severe out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors
- 4 Sudden, overwhelming fear for no apparent reason
- 5 Not eating, fixating on weight loss - significant weight loss or gain
- 6 Seeing, hearing, or believing things that are not real
- 7 Repeatedly using drugs or alcohol
- 8 Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality, or sleeping habits
- 9 Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still
- 10 Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

## It's important to consider:



### **Intensity:**

How severe are the symptoms?



### **Duration:**

Do they last 2 or more weeks?



### **Level of Distress:**

How much do symptoms impair daily functioning?

# ASKING FOR HELP

Experiencing mental health symptoms, such as anxiety or depression (or others), can sometimes be uncomfortable and confusing. That's why **speaking up and asking for help is a sign of strength**. It can be hard to know what to say but start with something like, ***"I've really been struggling lately. Can I talk to you about it?"***

Whether you reach out to a **parent, coach, teacher or religious leader**, a trusted adult can help you figure out what's next. Mental health services and supports are available and the earlier you access them, the better.

One reason to tell a trusted adult about your mental health symptoms is to **receive encouragement**. Simply talking to someone sympathetic can reduce your stress level and improve your mood. You may also want to ask for **concrete support**, like help finding treatment or rides to appointments.



START THE  
CONVERSATION.

# Responding with care

If you notice any of these warning signs and are concerned one of your friends is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition or thinking about harming themselves, don't be afraid to talk to them about it.

## LISTEN, EXPRESS CONCERN, REASSURE.

Focus on being understanding, caring and nonjudgmental, saying something like: **"You are not alone. I'm here for you"** or "I'm concerned about you and I want you to know there is help available to get you through this."



# Local & National Resources



## Helplines:

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### **24/7 Crisis Text Line**

*Text "NAMI" to 741-741*

### **NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore Helpline**

*Monday - Friday, 9AM to 4PM, 410-435-2600*

### **Baltimore City Crisis Response**

*410-433-5175*

### **Baltimore County Crisis Response**

*410-931-2214*

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

*24/7 hotline with skilled, trained counselors at a local crisis center, 1-800-273-8255*

### **Spanish Suicide Prevention Hotline**

*24/7 hotline; will be connected to a skilled trained counselor, 1-800-784-2432*

### **Maryland Crisis Hotline**

*24/7 hotline for an emergency situation concerning an adult or child's mental health, 1-800-422-0009*

### **Trevor Project Lifeline**

*The Trevor Project provides 24/7 crisis support services to LGBTQ young people. 1-866-488-7386 or Text START to 678-678*

## Youth Support:

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### **NAMI Young Adult Support Group**

*The Young Adult Connection Support Group is a peer-led group specifically for adults ages 18 – 39 who are living with a mental health condition, or are seeking mental health support. [www.namibaltimore.org](http://www.namibaltimore.org).*

### **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

*Confidentially talk with experts about thoughts, feelings, and suicide before exploring positive next steps. Call or text 9-8-8. Visit <https://chat.988lifeline.org/> to chat online.*

### **Child Mind Institute**

*Counseling & therapies designed for family and caregivers. General inquiries- 212-308-3118 <https://childmind.org/>*

# Working with Your School

Get your family involved

Tell your teachers what works for you

Ask for mental health referrals

Learn more about support you can get in school from your school counselor

Talk with your guidance counselor or school social worker about concerns

Ask about how your teacher can help you in the classroom

"It helps me to sit in the front of the room."

"Can you tell me more about IEPs (Individual Education Plans)?"



"Can I take a break for a minute?"

"I need reminders from time to time."

# creating a culture of care.



## Reduce Stigma.

Stigma is the biggest reason people don't try to get help. **Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group**, such as people with a mental health condition, according to the CDC. By taking steps to reduce mental health stigma in your school and community, you can help your friend feel more comfortable speaking up when they need support.

## Language Matters.

**The words you use matter.** You can better reach people, break down negative stereotypes, and give them hope by choosing words that are relatable and promote understanding. It can be hard to know what to say, and that's okay. This simple but caring approach may help others feel more comfortable and willing to talk openly about mental health and to reach out for support early.

## More Than Mental Illness.

**A person is not their mental health condition.** You wouldn't say someone "is cancer", so we wouldn't say someone "is bipolar." Instead, use words like "has", "lives with", or "experiences". Talk about mental health in a way that encourages hope and empowers others.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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We aim to continue to use these insights to further support the mental health of youth, and this includes educating and supporting their support networks. This resource guide, as well as a resource guide for parents and guardians, and students will live on our website at [www.namibaltimore.org](http://www.namibaltimore.org). For any questions, please reach out to us at [info@namibaltimore.org](mailto:info@namibaltimore.org) or (410) 435-2600.