

# A PEATC

Do You Know....



## Fact Sheet for Virginia's Parents Support for Children with Mental Health Disorders

### Mental Health Disorders in Children

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** defines mental health in childhood as *“reaching developmental and emotional milestone and learning health social skills and how to cope when there are problems.”* Mental health disorders are common and can affect your child's ability succeed in school and in life. The CDC has found that 1 in 6 U.S. children ages 2-8 (17.4%) have a diagnosed mental, behavioral or developmental disorder. 3.2% of children ages 3-17 (about 1.9 million children) have a diagnosis of depression.

**Some disabilities/disorders may also have mental health components or co-occurring mental health disorders.** Co-occurring means that both conditions exist at the same time. **Not all people with these disabilities or conditions** have a co-occurring mental health disorder. It is critical for professionals to **differentiate whether symptoms are caused by the primary condition or by a mental health disorder** because treatment considerations may be different.

### How do I Recognize the Symptoms of a Mental Disorder?

A mental health disorder **is just like a physical illness or another kind of disability.** It can be very difficult on the child and family, but it is not something to be embarrassed about. Mental health diagnoses **happen to people of all ages, ethnicities, and economic statuses.** If your child had diabetes, he would need to take his insulin. If your child has a mental health disorder, he likewise needs effective treatment to recover from and/or manage his illness.

**Children can manifest symptoms of a mental health disorder at a very young age.** Symptoms will change over time and can include **difficulties with how a child plays, learns, speaks, acts and handles his emotions.** Often the disorder is recognized when a child begins to struggle in school, academically or behaviorally.

### Resources on Children's Mental Health

**Virginia Department of Behavioral Services (DBHDS)**  
*Office of Child and Family Services*  
<https://bit.ly/39I2q3X>

**Center for Disease Control and Prevention**  
*Children's Mental Health*  
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html>

**National Alliance on Mental Illness-Virginia**  
*Children, Youth, and Adult Resource Center*  
<https://namivirginia.org/mental-health-resources/chi/>

**Center for Parent Information & Resources**  
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/emotionaldisturbance/>

#### Contact Us:

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# Fact Sheet for Virginia's Parents

## Where Can I go for Help?

If you believe your child has a mental health or emotional disorder, **contact his pediatrician** for assistance and referral to an expert. If your child is in school, you may wish to speak with his **school counselor**. **If your child receives Medicaid**, contact his care coordinator for assistance in accessing mental health care. **If you are in crisis mode**, you may want to contact your local community services board (CSB). **CSBs conduct all of the screenings for publicly funded behavioral (mental) health and developmental disabilities service programs**. CSBs are required by law to provide same day access which means that you can walk in to your CSB during available hours and obtain a clinical assessment on that day. Find your local CSB here: <https://vacsb.org/community-services-boards-and-the-behavioral-authority-csbs-and-the-bha/>. In addition, **the REACH program** administered by DBHDS is a statewide program for people with developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental illness or significant challenging behaviors. **REACH provides 24-hour access to crisis assessment and intervention**. For details on REACH and your area program go to: <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/Crisis-services>

## Education for Students with Mental Health Disorders

If your child has a mental health disorder that affects his education, he may be eligible for **special education and related services** under an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). **The same rules for any student receiving services under an IEP apply to students with mental health and related disorders**. Your child may also be eligible for services under **The Children's Services Act**, a Virginia law designed to provide wrap-around services and supports to students and families so that they can stay at home whenever feasible. Students with mental health disorders are **protected from discrimination and entitled to accommodations** under **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act**.

**PEATC** has a number of fact sheets available covering such areas as: *Eligibility for Special Education, Tips for IEP Successful Meetings, IEPs vs. 504 Plans, The Children's Services Act*, and more. You can refer to these fact sheets or contact PEATC for more information about how to ensure that your child's educational needs are met.

## Who Pays for Mental Health Treatment?

- **The Affordable Care Act (ACA)**-sometimes called Obamacare, requires that all health insurance plans sold on state or federal marketplaces cover mental health services as an essential benefit
- **The Mental Health Parity and Addition Equity Act**, passed in 2008, requires insurance companies to provide coverage for mental health, behavioral health and substance use disorders comparable to physical health coverage. **This includes companies with 50 or more employers, coverage through the ACA, and the Children's Health Insurance Program under Medicaid**
- **Virginia's Medicaid program, including FAMIS Plus**, covers many in- and outpatient mental health services. Medicaid expansion has increased coverage to more individuals
- **Medicare, Part B**, covers some outpatient mental health services. **Part A** covers some inpatient mental health services.

**PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.**

**For more information about us, please contact:**

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