

A MESSAGE FROM MHA

Young people today deal with a lot -- cyber-bullying, body shaming, community violence, abuse, neglect, unstable home lives, drug exposure, sexual orientation, immigration issues and more.

And those who are struggling with mental health problems often must deal with them on their own – because we don't recognize the seriousness of the problems until kids begin to get in trouble at school. That's too late, and it often doesn't result in the right kind of help. Mental health problems are best dealt with through health, educational, and social services and supports. But getting in trouble at school usually means adults implement disciplinary measures like time-out, detention, suspension, expulsion, or even arrest.

The real problem isn't that young people with mental health concerns are "bad kids" who need to be excluded from interaction with their peers. It's that they may not have the tools they need to handle emotions like fear, sadness, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and anger – which are often at the root of misbehavior – before they get to that stage.

This year, Mental Health America is offering tools that will make a difference, based on the best research and programs available.

MHA's 2017 Back to School Toolkit will increase emotional intelligence and self-regulation through materials for young people, for parents, and for school personnel, too.

While we can't completely shield young people from all the stressful or traumatic situations they may be facing, we can help them learn to manage their emotions and reactions in ways that cultivate resilience. And we can help the adults with whom they interact do the same.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Gionfriddo".

Paul Gionfriddo
President & CEO
Mental Health America

INTRODUCTION

The 2017 Back to School Toolkit is designed for MHA Affiliates, advocates, and organizations of all types to use with parents, youth and school personnel to raise awareness of the importance of mental health issues that start during the youth.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Be aware of the relationship between emotions and behavior problems in youth;
- Learn strategies for addressing bothersome emotions in healthy ways;
- Increase understanding of how disciplinary procedures centered around exclusion and isolation are more harmful than helpful; and
- Access resources for finding treatment and help in times of crisis.

This year's toolkit includes:

Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Drop-In Article for Parents
- Drop-In Article for Students

Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Facebook and Twitter Posts
- Social Media Images
- Horizontal and Vertical Banner Ads
- Call to Action Buttons
- Youth Mental Health: Emotions Matter (Web-based Infographic)

Handouts/Poster

- Tips for Teachers: Ways to Help Kids and Teens Who Struggle with Emotions or Behavior
- Helping at Home: Tips for Parents
- Helpful vs Harmful: Ways to Manage Emotions
- Youth Mental Health: Emotions Matter (Printable Infographic)
- Poster: The PATH to Calm

Lesson Plan

- Lessons on Building Emotional Intelligence (including worksheets)

In addition to the materials included in this toolkit, MHA has created a wealth of web content for young people and adults that can easily be linked to and shared in electronic newsletters and over social media.

Questions?

If you have further questions about Back to School, please contact Danielle Fritze, Senior Director of Public Education and Visual Communication at dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net.