

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Depression in Children and Adolescents Information for Teachers and School Staff

Definition

Students with symptoms of depression exhibit many behaviors that cause significant impairment in social or academic functioning. These symptoms include irritability, diminished interest in daily activities, social withdrawal, physical complaints, and declining school performance. The diagnostic criteria for major depression reflect the developmental differences between adults and children who suffer from the disorder.

Why do we care?

When compared to their developmental peers:

- Students with depression are less likely to participate in school activities.
- Students with depression are more likely to disrupt classroom activities.
- Students with depression often have at least one parent with depression.
- Students with depression are more likely commit suicide.
- Students with depression are more likely to skip class and miss time away from school.
- Students with depression are more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as substance abuse.

What can we do about it?

- **Become a more active observer of student behavior in and around the classroom.**
- **Consider different factors that may contribute to symptoms of depression.** Look at each student on an individual, case-by-case basis.
- **Inform caregivers and school clinicians about your observations of the student.**
- **Help other school staff members learn how to identify the symptoms of depression.**
- **Teach school staff how to respond to “cries for help” from students with depression.**
- **Create a feedback loop with caregivers and school clinicians to reassess student symptoms.**
- **Ask school clinicians to present on different treatment approaches for childhood depression.**

Helpful Forms and Handouts

- AACAP Facts for Families:
 - The Depressed Child: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/depressd.htm>
 - Children and Grief: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/grief.htm>
 - Teen Suicide: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/suicide.htm>
 - Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/86.htm>
 - Psychiatric Medications for Children and Adolescents: How Medications are Used: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/psychmed.htm>
 - Psychiatric Medications for Children and Adolescents:: Types of Medications: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/29.htm>
 - Psychiatric Medications for Children and Adolescents: Questions to Ask: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/medquest.htm>

- Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health – Depression Fact Sheet for the Classroom: http://www.macmh.org/publications/fact_sheets/Depression.pdf
- National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2005). *Family guide: What families should know about adolescent depression and treatment options*. Retrieve December 7, 2005 from http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/CAAC/Family_Guide_final.pdf.
- National Association of School Psychologists:
 - Depression in Children and Adolescents: Information for Families and Educators. <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/social%20template.pdf>
 - Times of Tragedy: Preventing Suicide in Troubled Children and Youth, Part I: Tips for Parents and Schools http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/suicidept1_general.aspx
 - Times of Tragedy: Preventing Suicide in Troubled Children and Youth, Part II: Tips for School Personnel or Crisis Team Members http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/suicidept2_general.aspx
 - Cash, R. (2004). When it hurts to be a teenager. *Principal Leadership Magazine*, 4(2). http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/nassp_depression.aspx
- National Mental Health Association Fact Sheets: <http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets>
 - ¿Qué es la depresión?: <http://www.nmha.org/depression/queesladepresion.cfm>
 - Depression: <http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/21.cfm>
 - Depression in Teens: <http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/24.cfm>
 - Dysthymic Disorder: <http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/26.cfm>
- Texas Department of State Health Services:
 - Important Information for Teachers about Depression: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/42D.pdf>
 - Tips for Teachers: Medication and Depression: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/43D.pdf>
 - Suicide: What should a parent know?: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/78D.pdf>
 - Suicide: What should I know? (for adolescents): <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/79D.pdf>
 - Childhood Depression (for children 6-12): <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/13D.pdf>
 - Life Can Be Tough (for adolescents): <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/12D.pdf>
 - A Kid’s Guide to Asking Questions about Medication: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/22.pdf>
 - Kris, Are You Sad? (coloring book on Depression for children 5-8): <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/14D.pdf>
 - Depression Monitoring Sheet: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhprograms/31D.pdf>

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*