

# Mental Health Concerns 101

Warning signs, further assessment, and how to seek help



# Potential Warning Signs of Mental Health Difficulties

## Physical Signs and Symptoms:

- Pounding heart, chest pain, blushing or redness of face
- Fast breathing, shortness of breath or dizziness
- Frequent stomach aches and pains not explained by physical health condition
- Muscle aches and pains not explained by physical health condition
- Shakiness, restlessness or difficulty sitting still
- Overeating or not eating at all
- Overly tired with sleeping during the day
- Sudden or dramatic changes in personal hygiene or physical appearance
- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Bloodshot eyes or tearfulness



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## Emotional Signs and Symptoms:

- Depressed mood, seeming uninterested in things they previously enjoyed
- Mood swings or angry outbursts
- Easily upset or agitated
- Isolated, withdrawn from peers
- Expresses feeling hopeless or helpless
- Overly sensitive to comments or criticism from staff or peers
- Low self-esteem
- Frequent crying
- Lack of inhibition, attention-seeking behavior
- Avoidant of trying new things or anxious about change



# Potential Warning Signs of Mental Health Difficulties

## Verbal/Cognitive Signs and Symptoms:

- Expresses excessive criticism of self, does not think they are “good enough”
- Overly pessimistic and negative
- Difficulty concentrating or maintaining focus
- Easily confused or indecisive
- Discusses violent or graphic situations frequently
- Demonstrates an obsession with certain topics or things
- Expresses arrogance towards others
- Demonstrates aggressive non-verbal communication towards others



# What should I do if I think a child may be a risk of harm to self or others?

Consult with school administration and policy/procedures

Utilize QPR:

**Question** - ask directly if the student is thinking about hurting himself/herself or someone else

**Persuade** - try to gently encourage him/her to talk with professionally trained staff and seek emergency care

**Refer** - contact local crisis services (606-324-1141) or call an ambulance/police if the threat is immediate



## What Should I Do If I am Concerned About a Student but it isn't urgent?

Seek consultation with other school staff and include school counselors and youth service staff in discussion

Contact family and discuss available services

Identify mental health provider in your school and discuss the consumer and your concerns



# Talking to Parents about Mental Health Concerns

From the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:

In communicating mental health related concerns with families, here are some of the factors that teachers and school professionals should consider:

- Remove feelings of blame or guilt about a child's mental health concerns;
- Recognize and acknowledge that parental denial and anger may exist;
- Communicate empathy and compassion for the parents' circumstances;
- Recognize that stigma continues to be associated with mental health related issues;
- Provide parents with resources and share with them that education is the key to understanding mental health related concerns;
- Take a problem-solving approach to addressing mental health concerns;
- Recognize the value of parents and schools working together as a team.

Open communication between parents and school professionals is essential to students' academic achievement and overall health and well-being.



For more information on mental health services, assessments, treatment, or to make a referral, please contact your school's Pathways therapist. You may also contact:

Jamie Baird, Boyd County Clinical Director  
[jbaird@pathways-ky.org](mailto:jbaird@pathways-ky.org) / 606-324-3005

Sarah Halcomb, Area Outpatient Director  
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