

May 1, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians of Collinsville High School Students,

May is nationally recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, promote wellness, and fight the stigma associated with mental illness and accessing mental health treatment.

While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. The National Alliance on Mental Illness's "You Are Not Alone" campaign hopes to fight stigma, inspire others and educate the broader public during this awareness month. Collinsville High School is joining with NAMI and other organizations to virtually provide practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with. This is especially important now when considering the mental health impact of the current pandemic. A flyer with this year's virtual mental health week is attached.

As a parent or caregiver, we know that you want the best for your child. Knowing what to look for and what to do should you have concerns about your child is important. The following is information from [mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov). It lists common warning signs that someone may be struggling and tips on how to start a conversation with your child related to mental health:

What to Look For

It is important to be aware of warning signs that your child may be struggling. You can play a critical role in knowing when your child may need help.

Consult with a school counselor, school nurse, mental health provider, contact one of the resources listed below or another health care professional if your child shows one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Seriously trying to harm or kill himself or herself, or making plans to do so
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Getting in many fights or wanting to hurt others
- Showing severe out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make himself or herself lose weight
- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Experiencing extreme difficulty controlling behavior, putting himself or herself in physical danger or causing problems in school
- Using drugs or alcohol repeatedly
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality

How to Talk About Mental Health

Do you need help starting a conversation with your child about mental health? Try leading with these questions. Make sure you actively listen to your child's response.

- Can you tell me more about what is happening? How are you feeling?
- Have you had feelings like this in the past?
- Sometimes you need to talk to an adult about your feelings. I'm here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?
- I'm worried about your safety. Can you tell me if you have thoughts about harming yourself or others?

When talking about mental health problems with your child you should:

- Communicate in a straightforward manner
- Speak at a level that is appropriate to a child or adolescent's age and development level (preschool children need fewer details than teenagers)
- Discuss the topic when your child feels safe and comfortable
- Watch for reactions during the discussion and slow down or back up if your child becomes confused or looks upset
- Listen openly and let your child tell you about his or her feelings and worries

If you have questions or concerns about your child's mental health, don't be afraid to ask and seek assistance. Contact your child's doctor, school counselor/social worker via email during remote learning, or community mental health professions for assistance. If you think your child is in danger of harming themselves or others, seek immediate assistance. You can call a crisis line or the [National Suicide Prevention Line](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), take your child to the nearest emergency room, or call the police. Your involvement in your child's mental health is vital.

Additional Resources:

[https://www.adolescenthealth.org/SAHM_Main/media/Clinical-Care-Resources/Mental-Health-Online-pager-for-Parents_jhedt-FINAL-\(002\).pdf](https://www.adolescenthealth.org/SAHM_Main/media/Clinical-Care-Resources/Mental-Health-Online-pager-for-Parents_jhedt-FINAL-(002).pdf)

<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/inthistogether/page/parents/>