

Supporting Student Mental Health

Empowering Students and Supporting Success: Prioritizing Mental Health at Home and School.

Association for Children's Mental Health





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*Empowering Students and Supporting Success: Prioritizing
Mental Health at Home and School.*



ASSOCIATION FOR
CHILDREN'S
MENTAL HEALTH

Hope for Families, Shaped by Lived Experience

Section 1: Understanding Children's Mental Health

Welcome to ACMH & Today's Training

Why Mental Health Matters for Learning, Belonging, and Student Success

The Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH)

Purpose:

- ACMH exists to bring help and hope to families of Michigan children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders.

Mission:

- All Michigan children & youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges and their families live in a safe, welcoming community with access to needed services and supports.

What We Do:

- ACMH provides information, support, resources, training, referral and advocacy for families of children and youth with mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders and the communities who support them.



What is Mental Health?

Well-being:

A balance of emotional, social, and psychological health that shapes how we feel, think, and act.

Key for Development:

Critical to shaping children's emotional, social, and cognitive growth, and their success in school and life.

A State of Balance (WHO):

The ability to:

- Realize personal strengths.
- Cope with life's stresses.
- Work productively and contribute to the community.

Youth Mental Health: Key Statistics

1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

1 in 10 face challenges that significantly impact daily life.

During the pandemic, youth anxiety and depression doubled. 75-80% of youth needing services don't receive them.

Suicide: 2nd leading cause of death (ages 10–14). 3rd leading cause (ages 15–24).

Mental health is the #1 concern for youth (ages 15–19), yet 80% feel uncomfortable asking for help.

Why Student Mental Health Matters

- Mental health shapes learning, attention, and school engagement
- Emotional challenges often appear early, and early support builds resilience
- Struggles can show up as behavior, withdrawal, or difficulty meeting expectations
- Unmet needs impact confidence, relationships, and academic success

How Mental Health Impacts Students at School



- Affects focus, learning, and academic performance
- Influences attendance and school engagement
- Shapes peer and teacher relationships
- Impacts social interaction and classroom behavior
- Shows up differently in every student

Obstacles, Challenges, and Barriers

Confidence & Engagement:

Mental health challenges affect confidence and participation in classroom activities.

Classroom Expectations:

Struggles with sitting still, staying focused, and being attentive.

Behavior & Emotions:

Difficulty regulating behavior and emotions impacts learning and relationships, leading to isolation.

Mental Health Symptoms:

Excessive fears, sadness, or hopelessness reduce focus, confidence, and willingness to engage.

Executive Functioning:

Challenges with organization, self-motivation, and persistence hinder school success.

Disruptions to Learning:

Behavioral challenges often lead to classroom removals, limiting learning opportunities.

Barriers to Mental Health Access

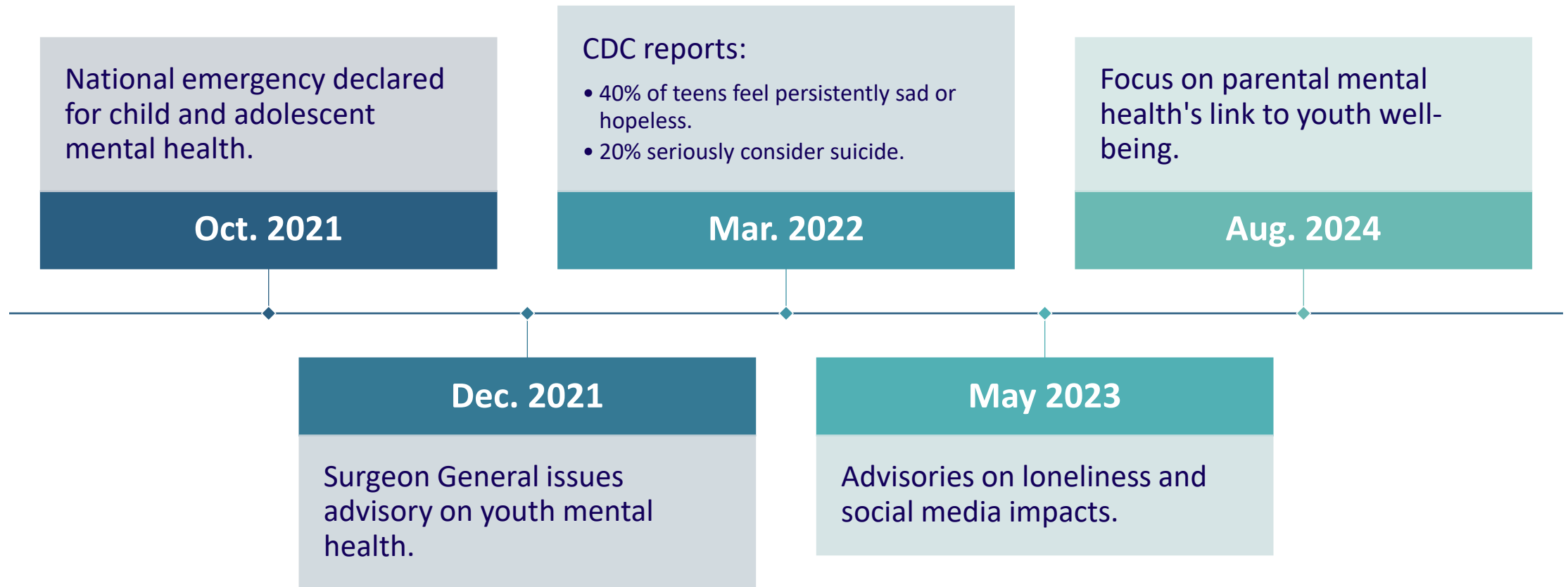


- Lack of Information
- Distrust in the System
- Resource Shortages
- Stigma and Bias
- Invisible Disability Challenges

Youth Mental Health Crisis: Encouraging Trends

- Growing awareness and focus on youth mental health challenges.
- More funding and commitment to implement solutions.
- Widespread dissemination of effective tools and strategies.
- Evidence confirms schools' critical impact on mental health outcomes.

Key Youth Mental Health Milestones



Social Media, Gaming, and Emotional Well-being



Social Media, Gaming, and Emotional Well-Being

- Technology can support connection, creativity, and stress relief
- Challenges arise with compulsive use, comparison, or disrupted sleep
- Balance, communication, and routine matter more than strict limits
- Short periods of intentional gaming may boost mood and well-being
- Goal: guide students toward healthier digital habits, not eliminate tech

A large iceberg floats in a blue ocean under a blue sky with white clouds. The visible tip of the iceberg is small and jagged, while the submerged portion is much larger and more complex in shape, illustrating the concept of hidden or early warning signs.

Recognizing Early Warning Signs

- *Key Takeaway:* Understand subtle signs of mental health struggles, like withdrawal, behavior changes, or academic decline.
- *Why It Matters:* Early recognition enables timely intervention and prevents issues from escalating.

Connection as a Protective Factor

- Small check-ins build resilience
- Presence matters more than perfection
- Normalize emotional conversations
- Simple moments can reduce stigma



Signs of Mental Health Challenges

Recognizing Challenges at School

- Social Signs:
 - Withdrawal or isolation
 - Difficulty making or maintaining friendships
- Emotional Signs:
 - Low self-esteem
 - Anxiety or frequent mood swings
- Behavioral Signs:
 - Acting out or disengaging from school activities



What you
see...

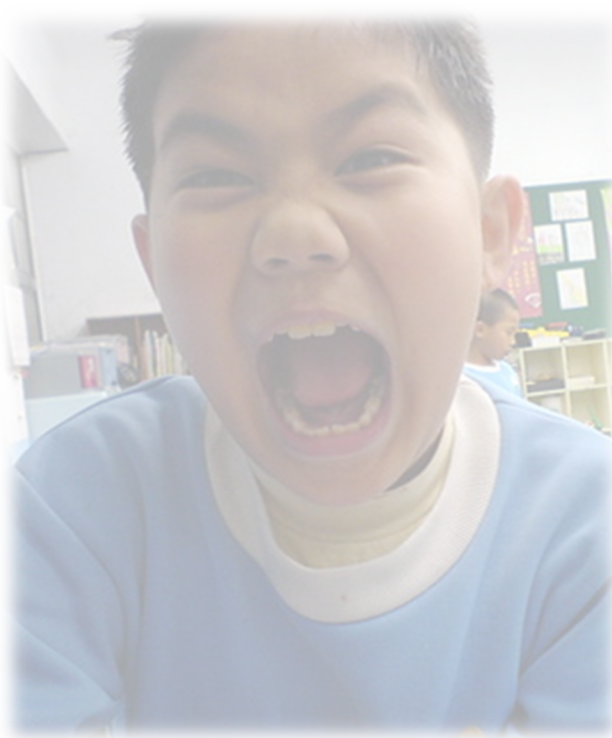


What we often
don't see...





Or Hear....



And sometimes all people
see is...

...The 'B' Word

-
- BEHAVIOR is Communication
 - What we see is not always what we assume.
 - Misunderstood or mishandled behavioral issues are common and often create additional challenges for kids.



Trauma and Its Impact



Understanding Trauma:

Examples: Abuse, neglect, loss, community violence.



Effects of Trauma:

Impacts brain development, emotional regulation, and learning.

Signs in students: Withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, disruptive behaviors.



Trauma-Informed Approaches:

Create predictable environments.

Build trust and provide safety.

Offer opportunities for self-expression.

The Role of Trauma-Informed Practices

Key Takeaway:

Trauma impacts learning and behavior;
adopting trauma-informed practices helps
create safe and supportive environments.



Why It Matters:

Understanding trauma fosters
empathy and equips caregivers and
educators with effective strategies.

Creating a Supportive Environment: The Circle of Support

Students thrive when support comes from multiple places.

Family

- Stability
- Communication

School

- Consistent routines
- Supportive learning environment

Peers

- Belonging
- Social connection

Community

- Resources
- Opportunities

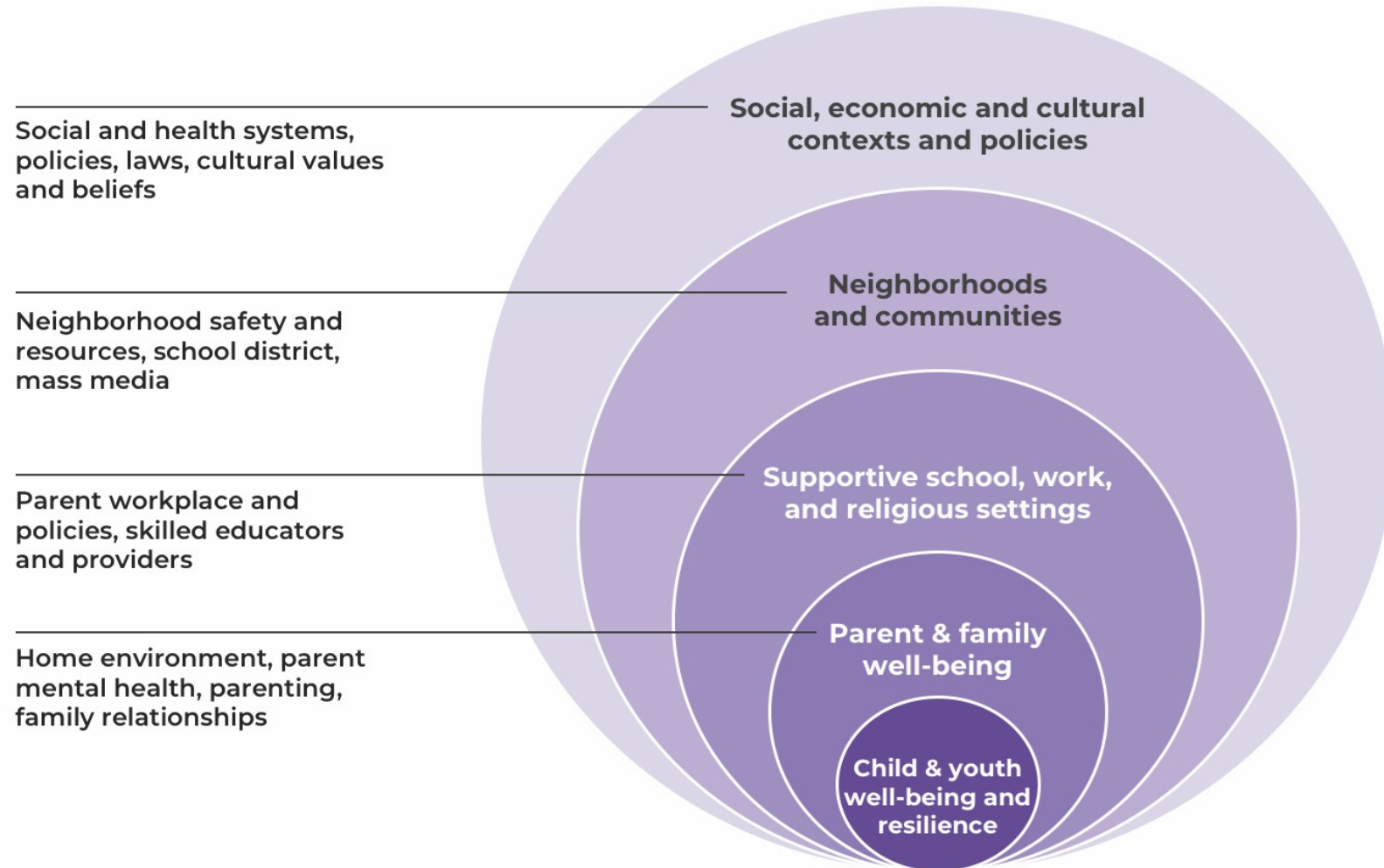
Systems

- Access to services
- Culturally responsive supports



Together, these layers create a collaboration ecosystem that strengthens a child's well-being and resilience.

The Circle of Support (Bioecological Model)



Questions Before We Move On?

Understanding Children's Mental Health

Let's pause here to check in, clarify, and reflect.

Section 2: Partnering for Change: Supporting the Whole Child

Working Together to Strengthen Resilience, Belonging, and Everyday Support

What It Means to Support the Whole Child

It's about connection.

It's about communication.

It's about shared responsibility.

This section explores how we work together to meet those needs.



What Success Looks Like When Students Are Supported

- More engagement and participation
- Stronger connections with peers and trusted adults
- Growth in emotional regulation and coping skills
- Increased confidence and self-advocacy
- Greater readiness for learning and academic participation
- Better resilience and ability to navigate challenges

Unlocking Success and Accessing Support

Get

Get Support:

- Partner with teachers, counselors, and school mental health providers
- Explore school-based and community mental health resources
- Encourage youth to identify and express their needs

Access

Access Accommodations:

- Request 504 Plans or IEPs when mental health impacts learning
- Collaborate on flexible supports (breaks, quiet spaces, extended time)
- Advocate for strategies that reduce barriers and increase engagement

Build

Build Connections:

- Strengthen communication between home and school
- Connect youth with peers, mentors, clubs, and supportive adults
- Seek community based mental health services when needed

What Helps: Formal Supports That Make a Difference

Tailored Supports

- Individualized plans and services that meet each student's unique needs
- Accommodations that reduce barriers to learning (extended time, sensory breaks, quiet spaces)

Formal Supports

- IEPs for students who qualify for specialized instruction
- 504 Plans for students needing accommodations to access learning
- Mental health treatment (therapy, counseling, medication management)
- Collaboration between school, family, and mental health professionals

Blended Approach

- Combine formal supports with everyday strategies to meet goals
- Adjust plans as the student grows and needs shift

Supportive Strategies & Accommodations

Academic Supports

- Extended time
- Breaking tasks into steps

Environmental Supports

- Quiet spaces
- Flexible seating

Organizational Tools

- Checklists & planners
- Visual schedules

Social-Emotional Supports

- Calming spaces
- Trusted adult check-ins

Positive Behavior Supports

- Clear expectations
- Reinforcing strengths



What an FBA Really Does: Understand the “Why” Behind the Behavior



IDENTIFIES THE PURPOSE OF BEHAVIOR

LOOKS FOR PATTERNS THAT
REVEAL WHAT A STUDENT IS
TRYING TO COMMUNICATE,
GAIN, OR AVOID.



EXAMINES TRIGGERS AND OUTCOMES

CONSIDERS WHAT HAPPENS
BEFORE AND AFTER A
BEHAVIOR TO UNDERSTAND
ROOT CAUSES.



GUIDES POSITIVE SUPPORT PLANNING

PROVIDES INFORMATION TO
CREATE PROACTIVE
STRATEGIES INSTEAD OF
REACTIVE CONSEQUENCES.



BUILDS SKILL-FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS

HELPS TEAMS TEACH
REPLACEMENT SKILLS SO THE
STUDENT CAN MEET NEEDS IN
HEALTHIER WAYS.



IMPROVES PREDICTABILITY AND SUCCESS

ALIGNS SUPPORTS ACROSS
HOME AND SCHOOL SO
EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEAR AND
CONSISTENT.

Important Considerations When Planning Supports

Student Experience

- Do they believe this will help them?
- Will it feel supportive—not isolating?

Access & Readiness

- Do they have the skills or tools to use it?
- Is coaching or modeling needed?

Feasibility & Capacity

- Can staff implement it consistently?
- Can it be embedded into class routines?

Sustainability

- Begin with 1–2 high-impact supports.
- Adjust as needed based on what actually works.

Keys to Success

- Feeling connected and cared about
- Engaging youth in the process
- Asking what they need

Youth Voice is the #1 predictor of success for school-based initiatives and support efforts.

Involve youth when planning and implementing IEPs, accommodations, and other supports.



Helping Youth Build Coping Skills & Understand Their Mental Health

Mental health can impact a youth's ability to:

- Filter distractions
- Adapt to change
- Build relationships
- Focus on tasks
- Manage pressure
- Navigate social situations
- Maintain energy for learning
- Ask for help or join groups
- Respond to feedback
- Cope with school-related stress

Adults can teach coping skills, model healthy responses, and normalize conversation about mental health.

What Youth Say: What Helps vs. What Hurts

What Helps:

- Listening without judgment and validating their feelings.
- Showing genuine care, empathy, and being willing to connect.
- Being knowledgeable about mental health and supportive strategies.
- Treating all students fairly, regardless of their challenges.
- Understanding that school is not the “end-all, be-all” for everyone.

What Hurts:

- Ignoring or downplaying students' struggles.
- Publicly calling out or shaming students.
- Making assumptions based on grades or behavior.
- Using misplaced disciplinary actions.
- Failing to involve or communicate with students about matters affecting them.

Questions Before We Continue?

Partnering for Change – Supporting the Whole Child

Let's take a moment to check in, reflect, and connect before moving forward.

Section 3: Strengthening Relationships & Collaboration

Strengthening Relationships, Collaboration & Child Resilience

Where Families Fit in the Support Team

Awareness

- Learn about youth mental health
- Notice early signs
- Trust your instincts

Connection

- Talk openly about feelings
- Normalize mental health conversations
- Share what you learn

Advocacy

- Know school & community resources
- Reach out for support early
- Partner with the school team



**Family insight + early advocacy + knowing where to reach for help =
a stronger path forward for your child.**

How Teachers & Schools Can Help Students Thrive



Teachers Can Help By:

- Building mental health awareness
- Creating predictable, consistent routines
- Encouraging open, stigma-free conversations
- Preparing students for transitions
- Highlighting strengths & supporting skill-building
- Collaborating regularly with families and support staff

Schools Can Help By:

- Prioritizing mental health for all students
- Reducing unnecessary pressure & workload
- Addressing bias to ensure equitable support
- Balancing academics with emotional wellness

School-Based Mental Health Supports: What Works

School-Based Health Centers

- Natural, familiar setting for support
- Increased access to mental health care
- Students are **6x more likely** to complete evidence-based treatment at school
- Students are more likely to seek counseling when available onsite

Why They Matter

- Strengthen physical and emotional safety
- Boost academic focus and learning
- Build social and emotional skills
- Reduce disciplinary actions and dropout rates
- Lower risk of substance use and juvenile justice involvement

Michigan's Momentum

- Over **100 centers statewide**
- **40 new sites** planned to support *20,000 additional students*





Resiliency and How to Build It

Resilience: What It Actually Means

- The ability to adapt, cope, and keep moving forward through challenges.
- Built over time through support, not from the absence of struggle.

What Strengthens Resilience

- Strong, caring relationships.
- Coping & self-regulation skills.
- A sense of meaning, purpose, or progress.

Ways to Build It

- Teach step-by-step problem-solving.
- Teach coping skills (breathing, journaling, movement, grounding).
- Build connections with caring adults and peers.
- Celebrate small successes and growth.

Building Protective Factors for Resiliency



Protective Factors That Strengthen Resilience

- **Positive relationships:** caring, consistent adults.
- **Sense of belonging:** feeling valued in school, home, and community.
- **Supportive resources:** access to mental health professionals, activities, and safe spaces.

Why It Matters

- Protective factors buffer stress.
- They help children stay grounded during adversity.
- They support emotional growth and long-term well-being.

Questions Before We Transition?

Strengthening Relationships, Collaboration & Child Resilience

Let's pause to reflect, clarify, and connect before moving into adult well-being.

Section 4: Adult Resilience & Self-Care

Grounding and Renewal for Sustainable Support

Because children thrive when the adults around them are regulated, present, and supported.

Before we begin.....

Take a moment to simply *arrive* in your body and your space.

- Notice what you're sitting on
- Notice your feet against the floor
- Notice the temperature of the room
- Notice what your hands are touching
- Notice one thing you hear
- Take one slow breath

Let's start with honesty.

For many adults, “self-care” can feel:

- unrealistic
- irritating
- guilt-inducing
- like one more thing they don't have time or energy for

You're not alone.

This section focuses on *micro-moments* of grounding that fit into real lives.

What Adult Resilience Really Means

Adult resilience is NOT...

- having it all together
- always staying calm
- never getting overwhelmed
- perfection or performance

Adult resilience IS...

- the ability to return to yourself
- small resets
- noticing when you need a pause
- steadying micro-moments
- being human, not superhuman



The Science of Micro - Moments

Micro-moments matter.

Your brain and nervous system change through:

- repetition
- brief pauses
- 20–60 second resets
- tiny intentional cues
- slow, natural breaths

These moments support:

- lower cortisol
- improved emotional regulation
- clearer thinking
- reduced reactivity
- long-term resilience

Small moments, practiced often, create big change.



Everyday Micro-Moments



Driving Presence

- Hands on the wheel
- Feel the texture or temperature
- One slow breath



Mindful Handwashing

- Warm water
- Soap scent
- Hands moving
- One steady breath



Sound Regulation

- Loud music for release
- Soft music for calming
- Rhythm to reset



Gratitude Micro-Practices

- One thing you're glad exists
- One small win
- One tiny moment of relief

Nature Moments

- Sun
- Snow
- Trees
- Breeze
- Light

Sustainable Support

Your steadiness supports their steadiness.

Tiny grounding moments help adults:

- respond instead of react
- model regulation
- buffer children's stress
- create predictability and safety
- stay connected instead of overwhelmed

Sustainable support = small, steady returns to yourself.

Any moment you return to yourself is enough

Self-care *is*:

- Small
- Human
- Doable
- Grounding
- Sustaining



Questions or Reflections?

Adult Resilience & Self-Care

Let's take a moment to pause, check in, and process together.

Section 5: Advocacy, Voice & Community Engagement

Staying Connected, Informed, and Empowered Beyond Today

Why Community & Connection Matter

Support grows when families, educators, youth, and communities stay connected beyond today.

Slide Points:

- Connection strengthens resilience
- Communities share resources
- Collaboration reduces isolation
- Support becomes sustainable



Youth Voice Matters

Young people thrive when they feel heard, seen, and included.

Opportunities:

ACMH Youth Advisory Committee

Student-led groups

Peer support clubs

Platforms for youth voice in schools

ACMH Youth Advisory Committee

Join a community of youth advocates working to improve mental health resources and support for young people across Michigan.

Your voice matters! Together, we can create meaningful change.

Interested? Contact us to learn how to get involved!

Parent & Caregiver Leadership



Family experience strengthens systems.

Opportunities:

ACMH Parent Advisory Committee

School/district family leadership roles

Lived-experience partnerships

Family involvement in planning or policy

YOU ARE NOT ALONE – JOIN US!

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

SUPPORT & UNDERSTANDING

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

CALLING ALL PARENTS & CAREGIVERS OF YOUTH WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES:



MEETINGS OCCUR EVERY
3RD MONDAY OF THE
MONTH AT NOON!

Statewide Parent Advisory
Committee Member Interest Form



PARENT **ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

INTERESTED?

EMAIL DROBINSON@ACMH-MI.ORG OR SCAN THE
QR CODE ABOVE TO COMPLETE THE BRIEF INTAKE
QUESTIONNAIRE!

www.acmh-mi.org | Phone: 1-517-372-4016 | Parent Line: 888-226-4543

Online Support That Helps

Trusted, supportive online communities:

- ACMH social platforms
- Child Mind Institute
- NAMI
- Trauma Research Foundation
- Parent/caregiver peer groups
- Social Media Resources (Instagram/Twitter/X)
 - @NAMICommunicate (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
 - @childmindinstitute (Child Mind Institute)
 - @traumaresearchfoundation (Trauma-Informed Practices and Research)
 - LinkedIn: Professional Groups for Educators and Administrators

Where to Turn for Student & Family Mental Health Support

- **Start Here → ACMH Website: acmh-mi.org**

Your centralized hub for Michigan student + family mental health supports.

On our website, you'll find:

- Student mental health information
- Family & caregiver tools and guides
- School mental health resources
- Parent & Youth Advisory Committee opportunities
- How to navigate services
- Michigan & national mental health resource lists
- Updates on statewide mental health initiatives

You should have received a 1-page “Resource Starter Pack” with the link to this training.

Gentle Call to Action

A Gentle Call to Action

Small actions build stronger systems:

- Stay connected
- Use resources that fit your life
- Share what you learned today
- Keep mental health conversations going
- Reach out when support is needed

Final Reflection

What is one small thing you're taking with you from today?
(There's no need to share — this moment is for you.)

*Thank You for Supporting Student Mental Health
Together, we can create environments where all
students thrive.*

ACMH Contact Information:

- www.acmh-mi.org
- Social media channels
 - Facebook: ACMHMichigan
 - Instagram: @acmh_mi
- Parent Line (888) ACMH-KID (226-4543)

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We are here to support you!



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For more information visit

www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org

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Michigan Alliance for Families

In collaboration with



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