

# Supporting Student Mental Health

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

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Association for Children's Mental Health





# Supporting Student Mental Health

*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

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1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

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1 in 10 face challenges that significantly impact daily life.

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

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

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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



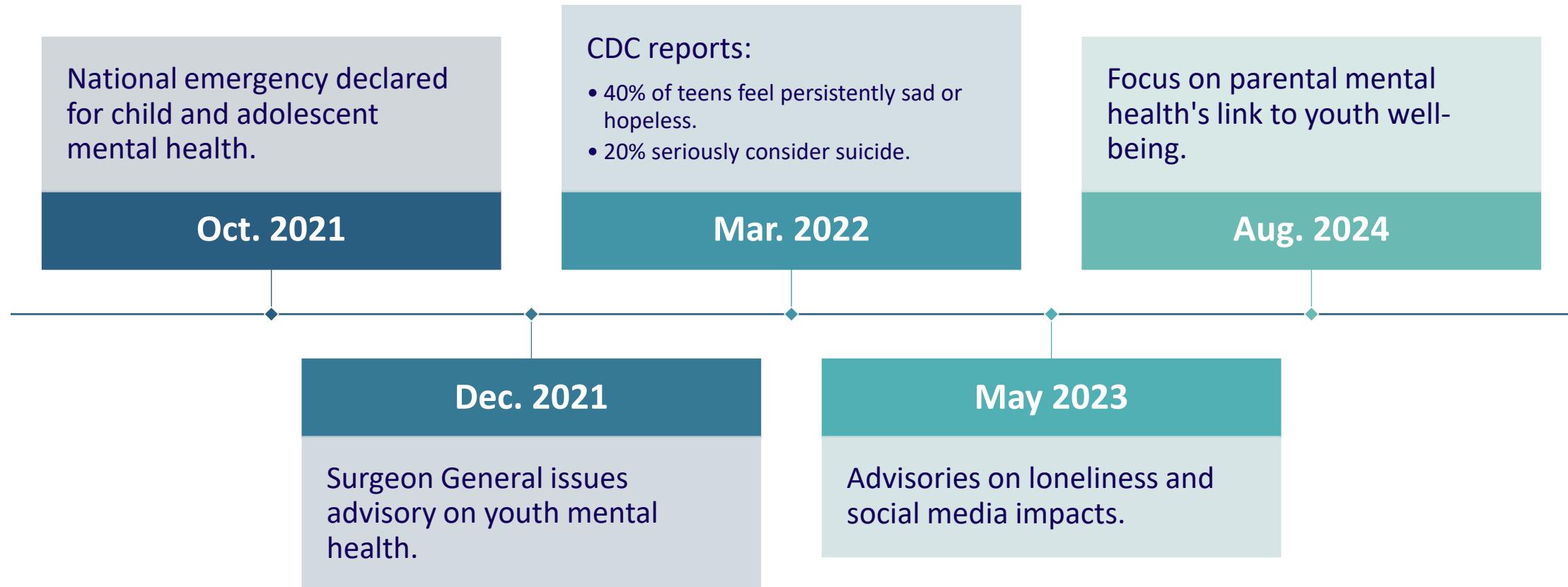
- Lack of Information
- Distrust in the System
- Resource Shortages
- Stigma and Bias
- Invisible Disability Challenges

# 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



# 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

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- 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...

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What we often  
don't see...

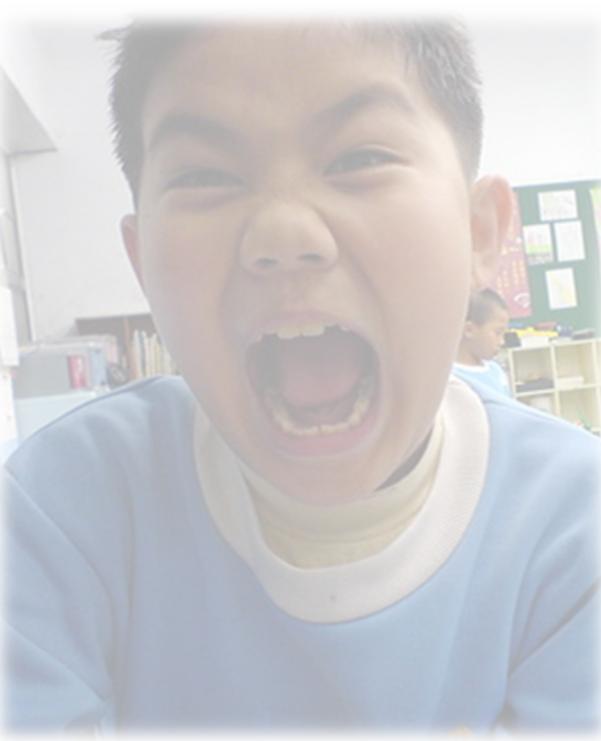
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# Or Hear...

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And sometimes all people  
see is...

...The 'B' Word

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- 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

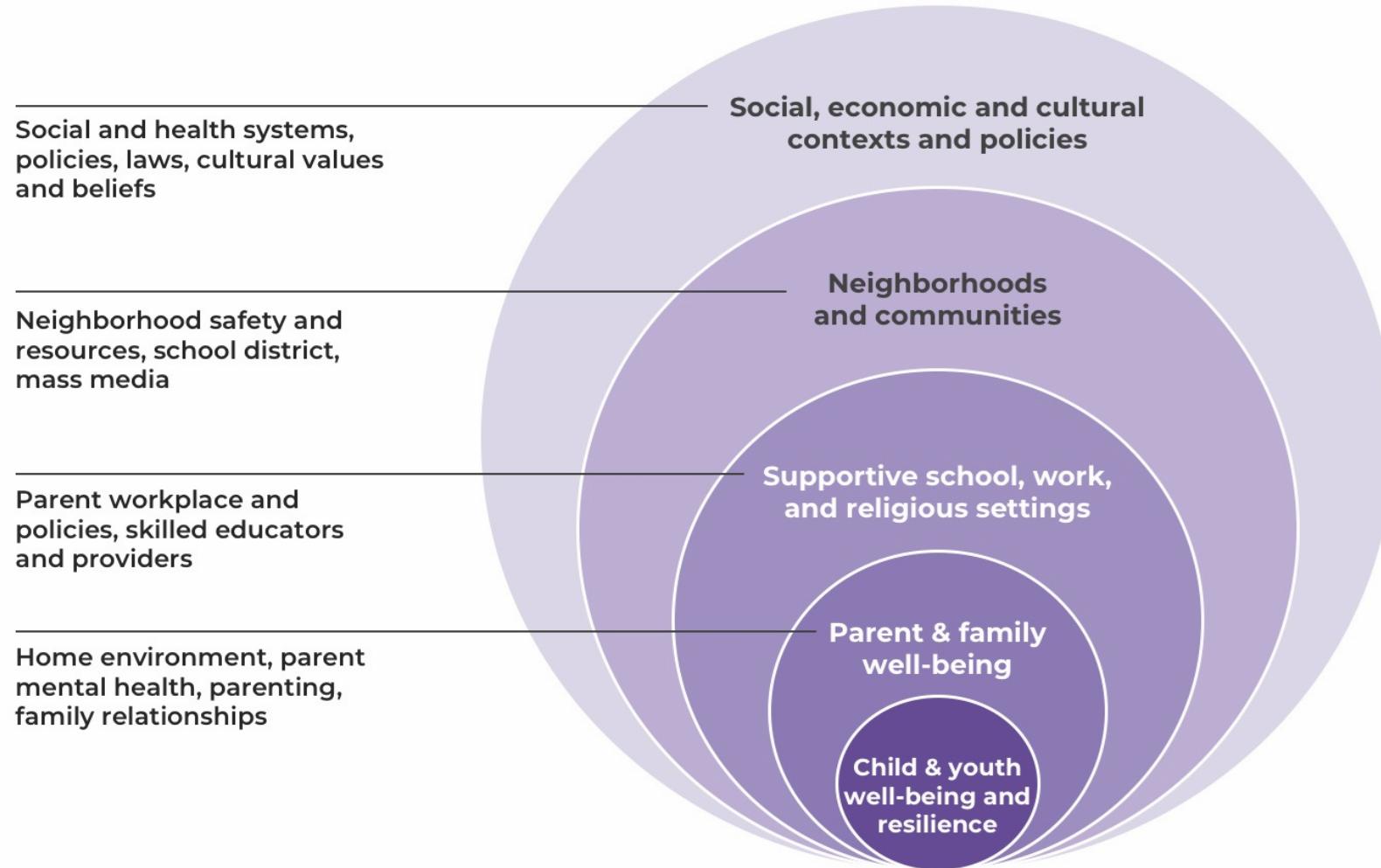
## **Systems**

- 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

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**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

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## 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)

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## 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

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## 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
- steady 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

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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

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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

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

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

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Interested? Contact us to learn how to get involved!

# Parent & Caregiver Leadership



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Family experience strengthens systems.

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## Opportunities:

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ACMH Parent Advisory Committee

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School/district family leadership roles

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Lived-experience partnerships

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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](mailto:DROBINSON@ACMH-MI.ORG) OR SCAN THE  
QR CODE ABOVE TO COMPLETE THE BRIEF INTAKE  
QUESTIONNAIRE!

[www.acmh-mi.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.acmh-mi.org)
- Social media channels
  - Facebook: ACMHMichigan
  - Instagram: @acmh\_mi
- Parent Line (888) ACMH-KID (226-4543)

Association for Children's Mental Health  
6017 W. St. Joseph Hwy., Suite #200,  
Lansing, Michigan 48917



# We are here to support you!



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For more information visit

[www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org)

Call 800-552-4821

En Español 313-217-1060

للغة العربية 248-963-0607

[info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org](mailto:info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org)



# Michigan Alliance for Families

Michigan Alliance for Families is an IDEA Grant Funded Initiative of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education (MDE-OSE); the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP); and Michigan's Federal Parent-Training and Information Center (PTIC) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs(OSEP).

[www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org)

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