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

Association for Children's Mental Health

Michigan Alliance for Families
information, support, and education

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

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Section 1: Understanding Children's Mental Health

Welcome to ACMH & Today's Training
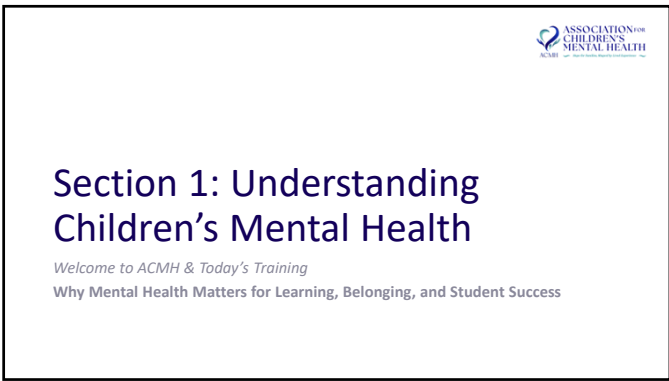**Why Mental Health Matters for Learning, Belonging, and Student Success**

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Why Student Mental Health Matters

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- 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

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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

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Obstacles, Challenges, and Barriers

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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.

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Barriers to Mental Health Access

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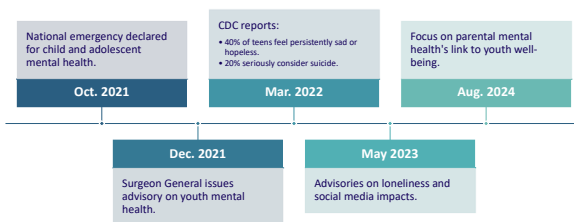- Invisible Disability Challenges

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

National emergency declared for child and adolescent mental health.

Oct. 2021

CDC reports:
- 40% of teens feel persistently sad or hopeless.
- 20% seriously consider suicide.

Mar. 2022

Focus on parental mental health's link to youth well-being.

Aug. 2024

Dec. 2021

Surgeon General issues advisory on youth mental health.

May 2023

Advisories on loneliness and social media impacts.

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

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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.

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Connection as a Protective Factor

- Small check-ins build resilience

- Presence matters more than perfection

- Normalize emotional conversations

- Simple moments can reduce stigma

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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

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What you see…

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What we often don't see…

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Slide 19

Or Hear….

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Slide 20

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.

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Slide 21

Trauma and Its Impact

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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.

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The Role of Trauma-Informed Practices

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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.

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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.

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The Circle of Support (Bioecological Model)

Social and health systems, policies, laws, cultural values and beliefs

Neighborhood safety and resources, school district, mass media

Parent workplace and policies, skilled educators and providers

Home environment, parent mental health, parenting, family relationships

Social, economic and cultural contexts and policies

Neighborhoods and communities

Supportive school, work, and religious settings

Parent & family well-being

Child & youth well-being and resilience

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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*

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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.

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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.

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Questions Before We Transition?

Strengthening Relationships, Collaboration & Child Resilience
Let's pause to reflect, clarify, and connect before moving into adult well-being.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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Any moment you return to yourself is enough

Self-care *is*:
- Small
- Human
- Doable
- Grounding
- Sustaining

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Questions or Reflections?

Adult Resilience & Self-Care
Let's take a moment to pause, check in, and process together.

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Section 5: Advocacy, Voice & Community Engagement

Staying Connected, Informed, and Empowered Beyond Today

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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

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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

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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.

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

Interested? Contact us to learn how to get involved!

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Parent & Caregiver Leadership

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Family experience strengthens systems.

Opportunities:

ACMH Parent Advisory Committee

School/district family leadership roles

Lived-experience partnerships

Family involvement in planning or policy

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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 QUESTIONAIRRE!

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

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Online Support That Helps

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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

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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.

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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

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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.)

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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)

Association for Children's Mental Health

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We are here to support you!

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www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org

Call 800-552-4821
En Español 313-217-1060
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Michigan Alliance for Families

In collaboration with
The Arc.
Michigan

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