Children’s Mental Health - What do you need to know?

- One in five young people have one or more mental, emotional, or behavioral challenges. One in ten youth have challenges that are severe enough to impair how they function at home, school, or in the community.

- One-half of all lifetime cases of psychological challenges begin by age 14, and three-quarters begin by age 24. In addition, 80% of people who experience multiple issues with mental health and substance abuse report onset before the age of 20.

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in adolescents and young adults. Children experiencing symptoms of psychological challenges, particularly depression, are at a higher risk for suicide. An estimated 90% of children who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental illness.

- Despite high rates of mental illness in children, 4 out of 5 children ages 6 to 17 who have experience symptoms do not receive any help. The majority of those who do not receive needed mental health services are minority children. For example, 88% of Latino children have unmet mental health needs. In addition, Latino children are less likely than others to be identified by a primary care physician as having a mental disorder.

- Unmet mental health needs may complicate daily activities and education for youth. Almost 25% of adolescents who required mental health assistance reported having problems at school. Over 50% of students who experience psychological challenges, ages 14 and older, drop out of high school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.

- Early detection and intervention strategies for mental health issues improve children’s resilience and ability to succeed in life. According to a study by the National Institute of Mental Health, preschoolers at high risk for mental health problems showed less oppositional behavior, less aggressive behavior, and were less likely to require special education services 3 years after enrolling in a comprehensive, school-based mental health program.

What can you do?

- Create awareness surrounding positive mental health practices and supports. Work to reduce stigma!

- Contact your local, state and federal legislators to request funding for early intervention and prevention programs.

- Encourage culturally and linguistically competent supports and services.

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