

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

The First Week of May Children's Mental Health Week

Wear a Green Ribbon

To show your awareness of children struggling
with mental illness and their families



The purpose of Children's Mental Health Week is to raise public awareness about a growing number of children who are recognized as having emotional and behavioral disorders and to disseminate information to communities about the needs of these children and their families.

With early detection and appropriate treatment, chances are excellent that most children with mental disorders can lead productive lives as adults.

Childhood Mental Illness

Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Problems Are Real

Young people can have mental and emotional problems that are very real, painful, and costly. These problems, often called "disorders," are a source of stress for the child as well as the family, school, and larger society.

The number of families who are affected by mental, emotional, and behavior disorders in young people is staggering. It is estimated that as many as one in five children or adolescents may have a mental problem that can be identified and treated. At least 1 in 20 -- or as many as 3 million young people -- may have a "serious emotional disturbance." This term refers to a mental health problem that severely disrupts a person's ability to function socially, academically, and emotionally.

Serious depression, once thought to affect only adults is now known to affect 1 in 50 children. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youngsters between the ages of 15 and 19, with 18 young people killing themselves daily.

Mental health disorders in children and adolescents are caused by biology, environment, or a mix of both. Examples of biological factors are genetics, chemical imbalances in the body, and damage to the central nervous system. Many factors in a young person's environment can affect his or her mental health -- exposure to violence, extreme stress, loss of an important person.

Tragically, an estimated two-thirds of all young people with mental health problems are not getting the help they need. Most often, children's and adolescents' mental health problems are not recognized for what they are and appropriate help is not sought. The stigma associated with mental health problems often acts as a barrier to getting help. It causes isolation and discrimination for young people and their families.

Caring families and communities working together can help. For more information about mental health issues affecting young people, contact the National Mental Health Association at 1-800-969-6642, www.nmha.org. A VHS resource on "Teenage Depression and Suicide" is available through Mental Health Ministries, www.MentalHealthMinistries.net.