

Parent and Guardians,

We know that many children and teens are dealing with mental illness. Across the nation One in Five teens between the ages of 13-18 have or will have a mental illness and 50% of all lifetime mental health illness begin by age 14. There are early warning signs to help you provide early treatment for your child.

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).
- Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.
- Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.
- Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.
- Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated). Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school. Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

One or two of these signs alone can't predict a mental illness but may indicate a need for further evaluation. If your child is experiencing several signs at one time and they are causing serious problems in the ability to study, work or relate to others:

- Contact your child's pediatrician. Describe the behavior, and report what you have observed and learned from talking with others.
- Ask for a referral to a mental health professional who has experience and expertise dealing with children.
- You can also reach out to your child's school. Contact the principal, vice principal, your child's teacher or school counselor to assist you in getting support for your child.
- You can contact County Mental Health Monday –Friday, 8 am -5pm at 916-875-1055.
- If a child's behavior is unsafe, or if a child talks about wanting to hurt him or herself or someone else, then seek help immediately.

#### **Other available resources**

- National Mental Health Association: (800) 969-6642
- National Parent Helpline: 1-855-427-2736
- National Crisis Text Line: Text 741741 to be connected to a trained crisis counselor
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (8255)