



**SCHOOL
BASED
DIVERSION
INITIATIVE**

YOUTH AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

THE FOLLOWING TIPS ARE INTENDED TO HELP PARENTS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S GENERAL WELLBEING. IF YOUR CHILD EXPRESSES SUICIDALITY OR MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS, CALL THEIR PEDIATRICIAN. IF THEY ARE ACTIVELY SUICIDAL OR IN DANGER OF INJURING THEMSELVES OR OTHERS, CALL 2-1-1 AND PRESS 1 FOR CRISIS.

HIGHLIGHTS

22.4% OF CONNECTICUT CHILDREN AGE 3-17 WERE TOLD BY A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER THAT THEY CURRENTLY HAVE ADHD, DEPRESSION, OR ANXIETY PROBLEMS (2024).

FOR MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND REFERRALS, DIAL 2-1-1 OR VISIT 211CT.ORG

IF YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, DIAL 2-1-1 AND, AT THE PROMPT, PRESS "1" FOR CRISIS OR VISIT AN URGENT CRISIS CENTER. [CLICK HERE FOR LOCATIONS IN CT.](#)

References

America's Health Rankings analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, National Survey of Children's Health, United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org, accessed 2026.

Marroquin, Y. (n.d.). *Parents: Tips for talking to your child about mental health.* Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. <https://www.chop.edu/health-resources/parents-tips-talking-your-child-about-mental-health>.

NOTICE THE SIGNS

- Notice changes in your child's mood, routines, or sleep habits- these can be warning signs of a bigger issue. Are they more withdrawn? Are they eating or sleeping more/less?
- Some parents are weary that talking about mental health will trigger an issue. However, open communication with your child about their mental health can have a positive impact on their wellbeing.
- Acknowledge how you speak about mental health. Your child may be willing to open up if they hear you being supportive of others' struggles.

STARTING A CONVERSATION

- First, listen without judgement. Avoid blaming statements (e.g. "How could you feel this way?", "You have nothing to be stressed about").
- Ask open-ended questions to learn more (e.g. "Can you tell more more about what makes you feel anxious?").
- Avoid the urge to problem solve- validate their emotions instead (e.g. "It sounds like you have a lot on your plate right now.")

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- Ask your child if they would be open to talking with a mental health professional at their school or in the community. Click [here](#) to find support in your area or call 2-1-1.
- Teach your child emotional regulation techniques, like deep breathing, and practice them. Click [here](#) for more ideas.

This resource is provided on behalf of the partnership between your child's school and the School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI). To learn more about SBDI and how it improves student outcomes, please visit ctsdbi.org or email Gianna.Mendes@gmendes@chdi.org

