



Schools can create a positive environment that cultivates student resiliency, shared support, caring for self and others, and a sense of community. When schools focus on the unique strengths and assets possessed by each child, they foster student resiliency.

Learn more about how to address the increasing levels of mental health issues in our school children.

For a free copy of:
Promoting Mental Health in Missouri's Children: A Guide for Schools, Families and Communities, go to www.healthykidsmo.org.

In 2009, there were nearly 900,000 students enrolled in Missouri public schools. Based on estimates nationally, approximately 81,000 children with moderate or severe difficulties were in attendance. An additional 90,000 students with less severe problems, but significant enough to impact school functioning, were also in attendance.

Promoting Mental Health in Missouri's Children



The Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition was formed as a result of the Governor's School Health Summit in 1994.

The Coalition is a statewide collaboration of public and private organizations assisting Missouri's schools, families, and communities with their coordinated school health programs.

Promoting Mental Health in Missouri's School Children

A mentally healthy child is more likely to be academically motivated, alert and successful in school.

The Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition surveyed Missouri educators and school health professionals about their greatest issue or challenge related to school health. Nearly 52 percent noted the rising number of children with mental health issues.

In Missouri, the number of children that have received mental health services for serious emotional disorders has nearly doubled from 23,310 in 2000 to 45,449 in 2005.*



*Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis: Missouri State Profile, 2005



According to the Missouri Department of Mental Health, parents and educators are the most likely to detect a mental illness or emotional disorder because of their constant contact with children. Warning signs include:

- A noticeable drop in school performance
- Unwarranted and persistent worry or anxiety
- An inability to cope with day-to-day problems
- Frequent outbursts of anger
- Frequent or severe aggression toward others
- An excessive fear of getting fat or of not being liked beyond the normal adolescent anxieties
- A pattern of deliberate disobedience

Promoting Mental Health in Schools

- Implement a bullying and violence prevention curriculum, beginning in the early grades and extending throughout high school.
- Train staff to recognize and intervene when students display verbal aggression (bullying, teasing) as well as physical violence.

- Instruct staff in evidence-based practices for de-escalating aggressive behavior.
- Develop prevention and intervention plans for psychiatric crises, such as attempted suicide.
- Create clear, consistent, school-wide behavioral expectations and individualized discipline plans that are based on “best-practices” research.
- Coach staff on ways to increase school engagement and a sense of belonging.
- Equip staff with the skills to build positive relationships with students.
- Support district comprehensive guidance programs as required by MSIP.
- Teach children social and behavior skills when they have difficulties in the same way that they are taught academic skills.
- Provide a safe spot (not used for discipline) for students with emotional difficulties to use when needing time to calm down.
- Promote tolerance for individual differences.
- Set a zero tolerance rule for all forms of bullying.
- Teach students healthy, positive communication skills.
- Make a special effort to help friendless children establish positive relationships.
- Reduce stigma surrounding mental illness.