

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.



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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Start Talking!

Building a Drug-Free Future



Know! July is National Minority Mental Health Month



July is nationally recognized by Congress as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. It's a time to raise awareness about mental illness and its effects on minority populations.

"Once my loved ones accepted the diagnosis, healing began for the entire family, but it took too long. It took years. Can't we, as a nation, begin to speed up that process? We need a national campaign to destigmatize mental illness, especially one targeted toward African Americans...It's not shameful to have a mental illness. Get treatment. Recovery is possible." – **Bebe Moore Campbell**

Health gaps among minorities have been closing, but there remains a lot of work to do. According to the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\)](#), members of a minority are less likely to have access to mental health services, less likely to use community mental health services, more likely to use emergency departments, and more likely to receive lower quality care. Stigma, too, keeps perpetuating the idea that mental health care and mental illness are something to be ashamed of.

Bebe Moore Campbell's words, spoken in 2005, remain true today. We need to understand mental illness. We need to destigmatize mental health care. And, we need to recognize and address the mental health care gap that keeps many of our families from getting the care we need.

The facts and numbers speak for themselves. According to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#):

- Americans from low-income households receive worse care than middle-income and high-income Americans.



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Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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- Over 70% of Black/African American adolescents with a major depressive episode did not receive treatment for their condition.
- Almost 25% of adolescents with a major depressive episode in the last year were Hispanic/Latino.
- Nearly 1 in 10 American Indian or Alaska Native young adults reported serious thoughts of suicide.
- Nine out of 10 children who die by suicide have a mental health condition.
- In the past year, 1 in 7 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults had a diagnosable mental illness.
- African Americans and Hispanic Americans each use mental health services at about one-half the rate of Caucasian Americans, and Asian Americans at about one-third the rate.

Mental health is critical for everyone. Young people and adults who don't receive treatment for serious mental illness are at greater risk for chronic medical conditions, and are more likely to die an average 25 years earlier than others.

So, what are teachers to do?

As teachers, we can destigmatize mental illness with our students. We can do this by using person-first language when talking about mental illness and by educating our students about mental illness.

We also need to keep an eye on our students. The [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) highlights the importance of being aware of the signs and symptoms of childhood mental illness, and recommends consulting with a school counselor, school nurse, mental health provider, or another health care professional if your child shows one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks;
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing;
- Getting in many fights or wanting to hurt others;
- Showing severe out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others;
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make himself or herself lose weight;
- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities;
- Experiencing extreme difficulty controlling behavior, putting himself or herself in physical danger or causing problems in school;
- Using drugs or alcohol repeatedly;
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships; or
- Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality.

Consider any act or plan of self-harm an automatic red flag, signaling you to seek help immediately.

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is available 24/7, is free and confidential. Call 1-800-273-8255 or visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> for an online chat or to access additional suicide prevention resources and information.

If the need is not immediately life-threatening, yet you are concerned for the well-being of your student, yourself or a loved one, you can receive free and confidential information in English and Spanish, 24/7, at SAMHSA's National Helpline. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357), 1-800-



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487-4889 (TTY), or visit the secure and anonymous Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

The consequences of living with untreated mental health illness can be devastating and deadly. As teachers, we want only the best for our students. Being aware of the signs of mental illness and seeking help when needed are vital in helping them live their healthiest, happiest lives.

Sources: [National Alliance on Mental Illness: Mental Health By the Numbers](#), [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Racial/Ethnic Differences in Mental Health Service Use among Adults](#), February 2015, [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: Talk About Mental Health – for Parents and Caregivers](#), [U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health: Minority Mental Health Awareness Month – July 2018](#).

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