

# Wisconsin Knows: Children's Mental Health Matters Toolkit



*Your actions today  
are a life tomorrow*

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# About This Toolkit

The Wisconsin Knows Children's Mental Health Matters toolkit provides materials for communities throughout the state to use to promote the positive mental health of all their children. In this toolkit you'll find the following resources to help you get started:

- ◆ **Promote Social-Emotional Well-Being:** In this section you'll find basic tips for supporting children's positive mental health and helpful links for more information.
- ◆ **Energize Your Community:** This section lists concrete activities that will help you develop a new project or adapt an existing project or event in your community that promotes positive mental health
- ◆ **Maximize Your Impact:** This section includes the following advocacy information to support your community's efforts to promote positive children's mental health:
  - ◆ The Difference Between Advocacy and Lobbying
  - ◆ Tips for Meeting with a Policymaker
  - ◆ Tips for Writing to a Policymaker
  - ◆ Tips for Working with the Media
- ◆ **Support Families:** This section provides a sample of what communities can use and customize based on their individual resources. You can download the customizable template at: <http://wisconsinknowschilrensmntalhealthmatters.wordpress.com/support-your-families/> It is not a resource guide, but a short list of resources portals/gateways where families and others can go to ask questions and find resources.

To make an impact at both the local and statewide levels, it's important that communities use consistent and effective messages. The Frameworks Institute has developed communications tools that help in talking and writing about children's mental health. Visit Talking About Children's Mental Health to access talking points, frequently asked questions and more.

We all play a role in supporting positive mental health for all children in our community: from families to schools, from child care providers to businesses, all parts of our community have the opportunity to support positive mental health development for our children.

Whenever you see children playing and learning in enriching environments, what you're really seeing is brain building. The latest science shows that these early experiences actually build the architecture of the developing brain; much like a house is built from the bottom up. Each step lays the groundwork for the next set of skills – like reading and math- and a lifetime of learning, success and productive, responsible citizenship. At each stage of development, from birth to adulthood, we know that mental health matters and that we all have a role in supporting positive mental health for our children.



# Promote Social-Emotional Well-Being

*Love Talk Play Read*

## Infants and Toddlers (Birth – 36 months)

- ♦ **Love:** Be affectionate and nurturing; hold and touch your baby frequently; make eye contact; smile; coo at your baby
- ♦ **Talk:** Talk and sing to your baby
- ♦ **Play:** You are the most exciting thing for the baby; play peek-a-boo; imitate the baby's sound and movement
- ♦ **Read:** Make reading aloud part of your routine

**Remember, when you respond quickly to a baby's needs, you're loving them, not spoiling them!**

National resource: ZERO to THREE, [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org), search social emotional development

State resource: Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health's website [www.wiimh.org](http://www.wiimh.org)

## Preschoolers (3 to 5 year olds)

- ♦ **Love:** Give praise, hugs, and spend special time together
- ♦ **Talk:** Listen actively by stopping what you are doing, making eye contact, and paying attention to what the child is saying
- ♦ **Play:** Play is the work of childhood and is critical to learning and healthy development
- ♦ **Read:** Use stories to help engage the child in labeling and identifying various emotions.

**Remember, all behavior has meaning!**

National resource: Vanderbilt University, The Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

State resource: Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health [www.wiimh.org](http://www.wiimh.org) and Wisconsin Pyramid Model: [www.collaboratingpartners.com](http://www.collaboratingpartners.com) search Pyramid Model

## School Age (6-10)

- ♦ **Love:** Encourage and respect a child's growing independence, give hugs, and acknowledge their successes (Remember to praise them for trying not just succeeding.)
- ♦ **Talk:** Talk with your child about their feelings, choices, relationships
- ♦ **Play:** Create safe spaces for your child to develop social skills with peers
- ♦ **Read:** Along with independent reading, create time for your child to read to you

**Remember, spending quality time together builds resilience!**

National Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) search building resilience in children

Search Institute: <http://www.search-institute.org/> search assets in middle childhood



# Promote Social-Emotional Well-Being

## Love Talk Play Read (continued)

### Preadolescents (11-13)

- ♦ **Love:** As so much is changing for the pre-teen, self-esteem is challenged and peer approval is desired. Create times for hugs and express your love for your child and positive regard for their peers.
- ♦ **Talk:** Develop new routines based on the changing lifestyle of your child that allow for private conversations. Rather than open-ended questions that may overwhelm, try suggesting topics to talk about and give your child the choice.
- ♦ **Play:** The increasingly self-conscious child will relish private times with you that are full of laughter. It is good to give a safe place to act young at times when they feel the pressure to grow up.
- ♦ **Read:** Books about people their age will help pre-teens to accept themselves and the changes they are experiencing. Suggest books that highlight teens doing positive activities and making an impact in their world.

Be as active in your preteens life as possible, attend school functions, including parent teacher conferences, have their friends over to your home, get to know your child's friends parents.

For more information check out Palo Alto Medical Foundations website at <http://www.pamf.org>

### Adolescents (14-18)

- ♦ **Love:** Teens "try on" different aspects of personality as they are discovering what works for them. Express unconditional love. Offer support and parameters for the exploration.
- ♦ **Talk:** Encourage teen to talk about their ideas and experiences. Listen without judgment. Choose calm and receptive moments to share your opinions. Help to build the connections in the frontal lobes by discussing what they are learning about the link between actions and consequences.
- ♦ **Play:** As peer-time increases, maintain regular family time with the teen making choices for how the time is spent. Consider play that involves healthy risks.
- ♦ **Read:** Continue to model reading. Share your favorite books from the early adult years. Ask to read one of theirs.

Be active in your teenager's life, know who their friends are, activities that they are involved in and their grades.

### National Resources:

Kids Health, A Parent's Guide: <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growing/adolescence.html>

Centers for Disease Control Positive Parenting: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) search positive parenting

Search Institute: <http://www.search-institute.org/> search assets list



# Energize Your Community

## Mental Health Awareness Project Ideas

**LOVE** – Below is a list of ideas to energize your community around promoting children’s mental health (social-emotional well-being). These ideas are just starting points and will require different levels of involvement, effort and resources. Any idea, project or event needs a home and a champion to make it happen. That could be you!

**TALK** – Your community likely has many events where you could include information from this toolkit to promote positive children’s mental health. You can use the ideas listed below or work with your community partners to develop your own idea.

**PLAY** – Through play, children try out new skills, explore their imagination and creativity, and develop relationships with other people in their lives. Plan fun family events in your community – playtime with children can bring out the best in you and your community.

**READ** or use other creative opportunities to talk about feelings. Schools, churches and youth serving organizations can sponsor community activities that allow children to express their feelings.

**Any attempt to engage your community – is an opportunity to promote positive mental health.**

- ♦ **Community Links**
- ♦ **Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day**
- ♦ **Children’s Mental Health Conference**
- ♦ **Balloon Launch**
- ♦ **Table Tents for Restaurants**
- ♦ **Express Your Feelings family Event**
- ♦ **Book Read**
  - ♦ **My Feelings Booklet**

Below are the toolkit logo and an image to link to the toolkit. You can download these materials on the [Energize Your Community Section of the Toolkit](#).

Toolkit Logo



Image to use when Linking to the Toolkit





# Community Links

A community is as strong as its smallest link. Community Links is a project that visually represents a commitment to the positive development of children's mental health. Individuals write what they intend to do to promote the social and emotional development of children and youth in their community on slips of paper, which are then linked together to create a long chain.

Connecting the links into one long chain is a fun way to demonstrate that community members are working together to support the development of children and youth. In addition, displaying the community links will bring awareness to the issue of children's mental health.

## Project Implementation

1. Decide what audience you would like to target for the Community Links project.
2. Distribute paper chain links along with a packet of information about children's mental health.
3. Get the word out about the project in your community
  - ◆ *Send letters to community members encouraging them to participate*
  - ◆ *Post flyers at local businesses with information about the Community Links project*
  - ◆ *Ask other businesses and organizations to distribute flyers*
4. Connect the chain links and display as a symbol of community strength and support
  - ◆ *Choose a prominent location to display the chain, library, mall or government building*
5. Liven up your campaign with some clever ways to use the links
  - ◆ *Have a contest to guess the number of links*
  - ◆ *Use the chain in conjunction with other activities such as workshops, family events*
  - ◆ *Send a press release and picture of the Community Links chain to the media*



# Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

As part of your May Mental Health Awareness Month activities, consider designating a special day to celebrate and appreciate children and youth. Although, May is Mental Health Awareness Month, these activities are designed for any point in the year. The first step is to decide the scope of your celebration. Are you going to do it in your community or are you going to make it a regional or statewide event? Do you want to designate a random day or do you want it to include a week-long calendar of activities?

## Project Implementation

1. Prepare a proclamation for May as Children's Mental Health Awareness Month. Contact local and state officials to sign the proclamation.
2. Collaborate with others – childcare centers, schools, services clubs – to plan and promote special activities for children and their families. Consider the following ideas:
  - ♦ *Organize a luncheon or picnic and invite local celebrities and legislators to speak*
  - ♦ *Plan a "hands across the community" parade*
  - ♦ *Hold a walk-a-thon or bowl-a-thon and urge families to participate*
  - ♦ *Organize a kid's day at the zoo, museum or park*

Madison Area Students participated in a Flash Mob Dance Routine for Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. For more information about the event, check out the [Children's Mental Health Day Part of our toolkit: <http://wisconsinknowschilddrensmenlhealthmatters.wordpress.com/2012/02/17/cmhaday/>](http://wisconsinknowschilddrensmenlhealthmatters.wordpress.com/2012/02/17/cmhaday/). Also check out the [Flash Mob dance routine: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOs46fHsIPc>](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOs46fHsIPc).





# Children's Mental Health Conference

A conference is a great way to promote awareness because of the active participant involvement it requires. Here are a few tips to plan your awareness conference.

## Project Implementation

1. Decide how you want to structure the conference. Some things to think about include:
  - ♦ *Target Audience – what areas of the community do you want to bring in*
  - ♦ *Logistics – date, time, place*
  - ♦ *Schedule – What events do you want to include? A meal? A keynote? Breakout sessions?*
2. Select a theme, and use the theme to plan the conference's individual events
  - ♦ *Provide a range of workshop topics based on the theme so participants have a variety from which to choose*
3. Choose your speakers and workshop leaders.
  - ♦ *Contact potential speakers and leaders early*
  - ♦ *Make sure you provide speakers with necessary information such as who their audience is, what materials you can provide for their presentation and the presentation schedule*
4. Advertise your conference
  - ♦ *Send press packets to local media outlets*
  - ♦ *Advertise on the radio, television or social media*
  - ♦ *Advertise in local agency newsletters*



# Balloon Launch

Hold a green balloon launch to engage school children and create awareness in your community. Involve pre-schools, elementary schools and middle schools in launching environmentally safe green balloons at a designated time to create awareness about Children's Mental Health. Younger children in nursery schools and day care centers can blow bubbles at that time.

## Project Implementation

1. Target Audience – Decide what schools and communities you want to target. Preschools and day care centers can also be involved (maybe they could blow bubbles instead of releasing the balloons)
2. Purchase green environmentally friendly balloons for audience. Don't forget the helium.
3. Set a date and time for the launch. Will the launch be done at each school or do you want to create a community event. You may want to involve a community leader to kick off the launch about the importance of children's mental health.
4. Advertise the launch:
  - ◆ Send press packets to local media outlets
  - ◆ Advertise on the radio, television or social media
  - ◆ Advertise in local agency newsletters



# Table Tents / Placemats for Restaurants

Restaurants can be a perfect partner in a community-wide awareness campaign. Their customers are as diverse as their menus and are located in several neighborhoods of each community.

## *Project Implementation*

1. Design table tents. Printed information could include fast facts about children's mental health, local resources and ways to enhance the social/emotional development of children.
2. Design placemats. Family activity calendars, resource information and parenting tips could be included.



# Express Your Feelings Family Event

Engage local schools, youth organizations and daycare centers in creating a community arts event. Youth are invited to express their thoughts and feelings through poetry, stories, drawings, skits, music or any way they choose to express themselves.

## Project Implementation

1. Decide what audience you would like to target for the Express Your Feelings project
2. Get the word out about the project in your community
  - ♦ *Send letters to community members, schools, childcare centers encouraging them to participate*
  - ♦ *Post flyers at local businesses with information about the Express Your Feelings project*
  - ♦ *Ask other businesses and organizations to distribute flyers*
3. Collaborate with others to plan the Express Your Feelings Show. Consider:
  - ♦ *Location, date and time of event*
  - ♦ *Refreshments*
  - ♦ *Printed Materials such as event programs, awareness article*
  - ♦ *Advertise – local media, social marketing, organization newsletters*



# Book Read

Increase your community's awareness about children's mental health through a community book read. Readers, young and old, can participate through book clubs, schools and libraries.

## Project Implementation

1. Create a list of books that talk about feelings, emotions, friendships, bullying, etc.
  - ♦ *Local libraries, bookstores and the internet should be able to help. You might want to come up with possible discussion questions for each book*
2. Contact local schools, libraries and community groups to encourage their participation during the month of May. Local bookstores might be willing to give discounts for purchase of the books or host the discussions
3. Advertise the Book Read in newspapers, radio and social media.
4. Prepare an evaluation for each group to provide feedback about their event.
5. Recognize groups that had the best participation.



# My Feelings Booklist

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Social-Emotional Content</b>
All By Myself	Aliki	Celebrating a child's independence
Calm Down Time	Elizabeth Verdick	Self soothing, learning to relax
The Chocolate Covered Cookie Tantrum	Deborah Blumenthal	Expressing anger in appropriate ways
Don't Worry Bear	Greg Foley	Comforting an anxious friend
Eyes, Nose, Fingers and Toes	Judy Hindley	Self awareness, body boundaries
Glad Monster, Sad Monster	Ed Emberley and Anna Miranda	Identifying and understanding emotions with pictures
Hands are not for Hitting	Martine Agassi	Understanding body boundaries
How To Heal a Broken Wing	Bob Graham	Caring for small creatures, empathy
I Can Share	Karen Katz	Sharing and conflict resolution
I'm Sorry	Sam McBratney	Empathy, apology and forgiveness
The Kissing Hand	Audrey Penn	Separation anxiety, attachment
Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale	Mo Willems	Attachment to a favorite toy
The Memory String	Eve Bunting	Grief, love and loyalty
My Friend and I	Lisa Jahn-Clough	Friendship, sadness and forgiveness
Say Hello	Jack Forman	Loneliness and inclusion
Sumi's First Day of School Ever	Soyung Pak	Caring behaviors toward a classmate experiencing fear
A Weekend with Wendell	Kevin Henkes	Annoyance and acceptance of challenging personalities
Wemberly Worried	Kevin Henkes	Worry and anxiety, friendship
When a Pet Dies	Fred Rogers	Understanding grief and healing
Words are Not for Hurting	Elizabeth Verdick	Feelings after hearing unkind words



# Maximize Your Impact

## Advocacy Tips

### Advocacy versus Lobbying

It's important to know the difference between advocacy and lobbying as you plan out your campaign's advocacy strategy. Read the Alliance for Justice's publication *Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits* to learn more.

### Meeting with a Policymaker

A community campaign presents a great opportunity to build relationships with policymakers. Set up a meeting with a policymaker or their staff member who works on children's issues, including children's mental health. Here are some tips from the Children's Defense Tips on how to effectively plan, complete and follow up after a meeting with a policymaker. Also, don't forget to invite policymakers and their staff to your campaign events so they can see how important children's mental health is to their constituents.

### Writing to a Policymaker

Don't forget about writing to policymakers! Use letters to keep your policymakers informed about children's mental health and your community's campaign. Here are tips from The Community Toolbox to make your written communications as effective as possible. Also, follow up in writing after any phone calls or meetings with policymakers, even if its jus to reiterate main points and to say thank you.

### Working with the Media

The media can significantly help spread the word about children's mental health in your community. Whether you use letters to the editor or invite the press to events, be sure to include a media strategy as a part of your community's campaign. Here are some tips from the National Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center of the National Mental Health Association about working effectively with the media. Also, see the following communications samples and outlines:

- ◆ Press Release Outline
- ◆ Sample Press Release
- ◆ Press Advisory Outline
- ◆ Letter to the Editor Sample

### Want to know more?

Google these easy to use resources that will contribute to a robust campaign for children's mental health:

- ◆ *The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations* by Marcia Avner
- ◆ *Mastering the Media* by David Hamlin with Sydney Weisman
- ◆ *The Communications Toolkit: A Guide to Navigating Communications for the Nonprofit World* by Cause Communications
- ◆ Various Publications by Fenton Communications



# Press Release Outline

ORGANIZATIONAL LETTERHEAD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Month, Date, Year

Contact Information:  
Name, Title  
Phone Number  
Fax Number  
Email

**Headline that is No Longer than One Line Using Active Words to Describe Key Message**  
Optional Sub header in Italics –No Longer than One Line

(Location) The first paragraph should be your lead. The who, what, when, where, why and how should all be covered in a way that grabs a reader's attention.

Quotes from one or two relevant people should be included. Keep in mind the concept of sound bites, which would be no longer than 8 seconds when spoken aloud. The quotes should reiterate your primary message.

Complete the press release with a few short paragraphs outlining background and details. Important details included illustrative statistics, research and/or comparisons. It's important to ensure that a journalist can visualize a story from the information provided here.

*Include a short summary of your organization and/or coalition at the bottom. This should reference the organization's/coalition's area of expertise as it relates to the press release.*

TIP: Always edit your news release before submitting.

TIP: Be sure you know who you should direct your press release to and take the time to learn the preferred method of submission

###

TIP: Limit the release to one page.

TIP: Use this symbol to indicate the end of the press release. If you absolutely need to use a second page, place -more- at the bottom of the first page and then ### on the bottom of the second page.



# Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
May 3, 2012

Contact Information:  
Shirley Maters, Media Specialist  
P: (715) 435.2351  
F: (715) 434.2351  
Shirley.maters@cmh.org

Eau Claire's Largest Employer Steps Up as Champion for Children's Mental Health  
Leading Business Pledges to Implement Employee Policies that Support the Health of Families

(Eau Claire) Just in time for Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 3, 2012, Eau Claire's top employer, Blank-n-Blank, launched new employee programs and policies that support children's mental health. Blank-n-Blank invested \$200,000 in their Employee Assistance Program with an emphasis on comprehensive and continuous access to mental health services for all families. Additionally, employee policies have been extended to include flex-time options and paid wellness days that can support families in addressing social emotional development.

"It's really just business savvy," says Bea Kind, CEO of Blank-n-Blank, "When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay it back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship."

In collaboration with the Western Wisconsin Children's Mental Health Coalition, Blank-n-Blank has been able to make policy changes that are based in research on child and adolescent development and health. A child's brain is developing rapidly setting the foundation for life. Researchers report that certain stressors that a child may experience early in life, like extreme poverty or abuse and neglect can lead to mental health problems. In fact, one in five of Wisconsin's children and adolescents appear to be healthy on the outside, but are experiencing mental health issues on the inside.

Eau Claire's community is taking major cross-sector strides in developing environments for children that support children by promoting positive experiences and reducing the prevalence of the toxic stressors. With innovative community collaboration, high quality programs like these are supporting environments that have shown significant long-term improvements for children and adolescents.

"We experience momentous gains, when every community stakeholders recognize that they can support children's mental health," stated Sue Nuff, facilitator of the Western Wisconsin Children's Mental Health Coalition, "Blank-n-Blank knows that Children's Mental Health Matters and they've taken action to prove it."

The Western Wisconsin Children's Mental Health Coalition consists of seven entities, including four local nonprofits, the hospital, the chamber of commerce, and the school district, all of which have committed to making environmental and policy changes that support children's mental health.

###



# Press Advisory Outline

## ORGANIZATIONAL LETTERHEAD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Month, Date, Year

Contact Information:  
Name, Title  
Phone Number  
Fax Number  
Email

## PRESS ADVISORY

Who: Organization

What: Briefly describe the event and the issue to which it pertains. Include details such as speakers and topics. Also, if a photo opportunity exists, include this with a submission to the photo editor.

When: Include Date and Time

Where: Location Name and Address. If difficult to find, include directions.

Include a short summary of your organization at the bottom. This should reference the organization's area of expertise as it relates to the event described in the press advisory.

###

TIP: Follow up calls the day before your event will be a reminder. Have the advisory ready to fax or e-mail again.

TIP: Submit your press advisory so that editors and reporters have 3 to 5 days-notice prior to the event

TIP: Use this symbol to indicate the end of the press advisory. Press advisories should not exceed one page.



# Letter to the Editor Sample

Letter to the Editor Sample

May 3, 2012

Mr. Ed Itor  
111 Newspaper Ave.  
Tribune, WI 57555

Dear Mr. Itor,

Upon reading Ms. Gold's December 1st article Foster Kids Given Psychiatric Drugs at Higher Rates, I found my emotions following a very similar path to a rollercoaster. I felt enraged. I felt beyond sad. I felt helpless. I imagine these are the same mix of emotions that many children in foster care feel every day.

However, I found not only the problem to be alarming, but also the solution or lack thereof. There is no denying that the requirement of having a developed protocol laid out in The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act is a good thing, as would be defined processes for oversight and accountability. However, this does not ensure that children's emotional and mental health needs are appropriately met.

One way to think about mental health for children is that it's like the levelness of a piece of furniture, such as a table. That levelness can depend on the table, the floor it's on, or both. Just as levelness allows a table to function properly, the mental health of a child enables them to function in many different areas. When children's brains develop in environments of toxic stress, it's like a table on an uneven floor. And tables can't make themselves level; they need attention from experts who understand levelness and stability and who can work on the table, the floor or even both.

Sincerely,

Connie Serned

In response to: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2011/12/01/143017520/foster-kids-even-infants-more-likely-to-be-given-psychotropic-drugs>



# Supporting Families

## Where Do You Start?

This resource list has three key resources where people can go to find more information and support. Resources for families are unique to each community and no one knows those resources better than the people who live there!

Included in this resources sheet are some general/portal resources to help connect families to more specific resources as well as suggestions for community resources you may want to include. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather a place for you to offer a starting point to support a family whatever their needs are.

## *Connecting Families and Caregivers to Resources that Support and Promote Positive Mental Health and Wellness*

**The Maternal Child Hotline:** 1-800-722-2295

Twenty-four hours/day, 7 days/week

The Wisconsin Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Hotline provides information and links to services and resources for women before, during, and after pregnancy and for children including children with special health care needs.

## *2-1-1*

**Twenty-four hours/day, 7 days/week**

2-1-1 access is available for all Wisconsin counties. When you dial 2-1-1, you will talk to a trained resource specialist who has access to a comprehensive database listings of nearly all health and human services that exists in your community. Information and referral is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the year.

## *Wisconsin Family Ties: 800-422-7145*

**Available Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-5:00 pm**

Wisconsin Family Ties aids families and professionals in finding important and up-to-date information on laws, school issues, behavioral and emotional disorder, and other resources.

**Customize the resource guide for your community. Think about including the following resources:**

- ◆ Your local Library
- ◆ Your local Family Resource Center
- ◆ Your local Birth to 3 Agency
- ◆ Your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
- ◆ Your regional center for Children and Youth with special care needs