

# Is Your Teen at Risk?

Adolescence isn't an easy time for children or parents. As children move through the many transitions of adolescence (physical, emotional, social, hormonal, sexual, intellectual) pressure and problems can seem overwhelming. For many adolescents, these pressures can lead to mental health disorders and/or substance abuse.<sup>2</sup>

## QUICK FACTS!



**20%** of youth ages 13-18 lives with a mental health condition.<sup>1</sup>



**90%** of those who died from suicide had an underlying mental illness. Suicide is the **3<sup>rd</sup>** leading cause of death in youth ages 10—24.<sup>1</sup>

### Of Massachusetts Teens:



have tried alcohol (1/3 in the past month).<sup>3</sup>



have tried marijuana and other illicit drugs (1/4 have used marijuana in the past month).<sup>3</sup>



have used prescription pills that were not their own.<sup>3</sup>



have been offered/sold drugs in school.<sup>3</sup>

## Recognizing Mental Illness & Substance Abuse



### WARNING SIGNS



#### Mood

- Extreme sadness or seems withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (crying, fatigue, unmotivated)<sup>1</sup>
- Persistent or episodic worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities<sup>1</sup>
- Paranoia or excessive secrecy<sup>2</sup>
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness<sup>2</sup>
- Expressing thoughts of self-harm<sup>1</sup>
- Dressing in a way that may conceal self-harm or injury<sup>2</sup>
- Excessive worries about body image<sup>2</sup>
- Unusual episodic behavior changes not easily explained otherwise<sup>2</sup>

#### Physical

- Unexplainable weight changes<sup>1</sup>
- Avoidance of food or noticeable changes in eating habits<sup>2</sup>
- Immediate trips to the bathroom or another private spot after a meal<sup>2</sup>
- Changes in sleep patterns or energy level<sup>2</sup>
- Decline in concern about self-hygiene<sup>1</sup>
- Drug or alcohol paraphernalia<sup>1</sup>

#### Social

- Withdrawing or declining interest in friends or social groups and activities<sup>2</sup>
- Decline in school performance<sup>2</sup>



### Tips for Parents

- Keep communication constant, open, and honest
- Be attentive to your teen's behavior
- Be aware of warning signs
- Talk to your pediatrician
- Restrict access to potential dangers for self-harm

***If you need immediate or emergency services, please call 911 or a 24-hour crisis hotline such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)***

National Alliance on Mental Illness<sup>1</sup>  
HealthyChildren.org<sup>2</sup>  
Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth-www.mass.gov<sup>3</sup>