



Mental Health Awareness & Early Identification

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Children and adolescents may experience emotional fluctuations as part of normal development. However, persistent or significant changes in mood, behavior, relationships, motivation, or functioning may indicate that a student is experiencing emotional distress and could benefit from additional support. These signs often appear subtly at first, but if left unaddressed, they can escalate and impact a student's daily functioning, relationships, and overall well being. Please, note that these signs do not necessarily indicate a mental health disorder and identification will be conducted by the School Psychologist, on the next steps. Therefore, educators' awareness, early recognition and collaboration between school and families can help ensure that students receive appropriate care and support. When concerns persist or uncertainty exists, staff are encouraged to consult with the School Psychologist.

Below are the most common signs of emotional distress students may present:

Early Years/Elementary

- Feeling excessively sad, low, or worried and anxious
- Confused thinking, or problems concentrating and learning
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains"), often paired with frequent visits to the school nurse
- Changes in school performance
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Persistent oppositional or aggressive behavior

Middle/High School

- Significant changes in mood, behavior, or personality compared to the student's usual presentation
- Uncharacteristic levels of anxiety, anger or moodiness
- Aggressive behavior



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- Social Withdrawal and Isolation
- Significant distress related to body image, food, eating habits, or weight
- Lack of self-care or risky behaviors
- Abuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains"), often paired with frequent visits to the school nurse
- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts
- Emotional Avoidance signs such as excessive sensitivity to failure, school avoidance, difficulty to show appropriate emotional reactions, constant reassurance seeking
- Online/Social media changes such as sudden withdrawal/excessive use of online/social interaction, distress related to social media, cyberbullying concerns/reports, unhealthy comparison behaviors

Early support, connection, and collaboration between school and families can significantly improve student wellbeing and outcomes.

In conclusion, it is important to note that these signs do not necessarily indicate the presence of a mental health disorder. Further assessment and identification of any concerns will be conducted by the School Psychologist, who will also determine and advise on the appropriate next steps. In the case of related to self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or student safety should be reported immediately to the School Psychologist and school leadership.