

Supporting the Mental Health of Young People: Guide for School Staff



Our Vision

Chicago Public Schools recognizes and values the importance of mental health supports and services for the well-being of our students, staff, and school communities.

We promote, provide, and develop a robust continuum of care through the convergence of policy creation, behavioral health services, multi-tiered systems of social and emotional support, restorative practices, and community partnerships to advance a culture of mental health and wellness in equitable ways across the District.

A mental health or substance use challenge can have varying signs or symptoms for students. If they are frequent, lasting, and begin affecting school performance, relationships, and participation in activities, it's important to connect the student to available resources.

If you suspect a student is experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge, refer the student to your school's clinician or Behavioral Health Team (BHT). You **must** refer the student to a clinician if you believe they are in crisis.

Signs of mental health illness in youth¹:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes
- Chronic absenteeism
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Feeling tired or experiencing chronic fatigue
- Changes in appearance and/or hygiene

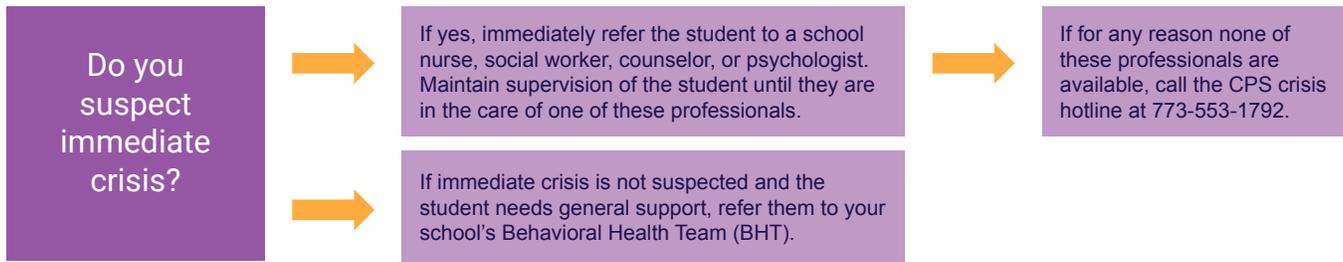
According to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), **17% of Chicago high school students** and **33% of Chicago middle school students** have seriously considered attempting suicide. Any student can be impacted by a mental health challenge. Data from YRBS show students who experience sadness or hopelessness, or those who have suicidal thoughts, are more likely to report earnings D's and F's.² Research on suicide risk factors also suggests high achieving young people may have characteristics that put them at high risk of suicide ideation. Addressing mental health in schools can have lasting benefits on all Chicago youth.³

¹ Warning Signs and Symptoms. National Alliance on Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms>

² 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Chicago). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://yrbs-explorer.services.cdc.gov/#/>

³ Suicide Among Gifted Adolescents: How to Prevent It The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (1990-2013). <https://nrcgt.uconn.edu/newsletters/spring012/#>

What You Can Do



An immediate crisis refers to any situation where an individual is at risk of harming themselves or others (on purpose or accidentally), or getting in trouble with the law. If you are unsure, it is safer to assume yes and refer the student to a professional.

Current Support Resources

Chicago Public Schools utilizes the public health Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach to provide guidance on the promotion and practice of mental health supports.

Tier 1 encompasses universal, whole school, supports that help build a culture of wellness.

Tier 2 supports are targeted interventions aimed at specific groups.

Tier 3 supports are offered on an individual basis to cater to the unique needs of our school populations.

	SERVICES	TRAININGS	GUIDELINES	PRACTICES
Tier 1	24/7 Student Safety Center: 773-553-3335 Crisis Hotline: M-F 8-5pm (for crisis consultation) 773-553-1792 Community partner referrals	Youth Mental Health First Aid Protecting Chicago's Children (required for all District staff) Crisis 101	Legal guidance for District Mental Health Professionals Restorative Practices Toolkit Crisis Manual	Student led projects (Student Voice Committees) Equity Framework School Counseling Handbook
Tier 2	Grief/ Emotional Support Services Support for Educator Wellness & Compassion Fatigue Clinical group interventions: SPARCS, Act and Adapt, Bounce Back, and CBITS	Student Led Community Building Training Crisis Team Training ASPEN Training for Tier II Interventions	Equity: Targeted Universalism Crisis Manual Referral procedures for School-Based Clinicians	Student Protections Manual for Parents & Students Student Voice Committee Building (Mental Health Supports for Students & Admin) Student Supports for Gender Diversity
Tier 3	Support for Impacted Individuals/ Safety Interventions Individual Counseling	Re-entry Circles Training Crisis 101 & Crisis Planning TREP Project Trauma Training for Nurses	Restorative Practices Toolkit MTSS Aspen Guidance Crisis Manual	

Note: Additional resources may be available. For specific questions, contact OSHW@cps.edu.

This material was supported by Cooperative Agreement number 6 NU87PS004311, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.