

**How does your child
think, feel and act?**



Pay Attention!



A guide
to the
well-being
of your
child from
birth to six



THIS BOOKLET WAS PREPARED BY

WESTCHESTER CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1914, Westchester Children's Association is a non-profit organization providing an independent voice for the children and teens of Westchester. Many of the programs and services that have benefited generations of Westchester's children are a result of the indefatigable efforts of WCA.

Westchester Children's Association works to ensure that all children are healthy, safe and prepared for life's challenges.

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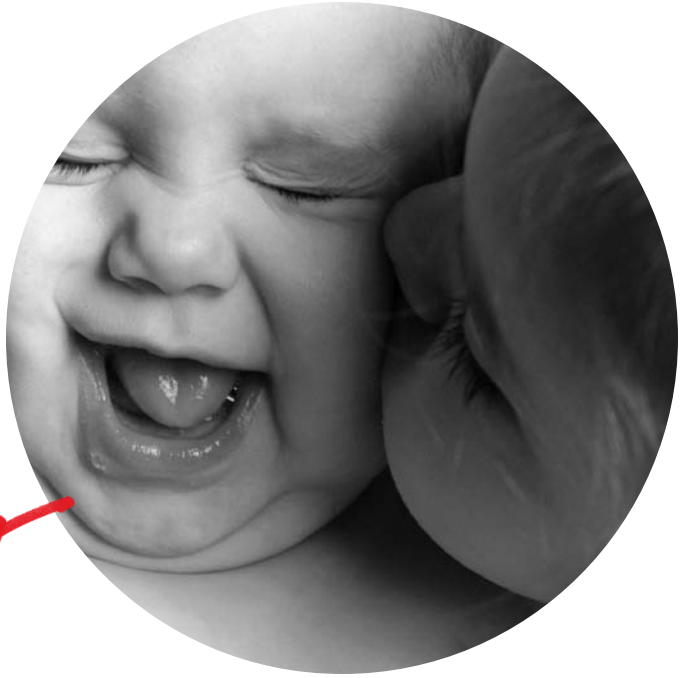
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*What
is*

mental health?

Why it's important...

Mental health affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It is an important part of your child's overall health.

Even before children can speak, their mental health can be affected by what they hear, see, and feel.

By paying attention to your children's mental health now, you can prevent them from developing more serious problems as they grow older.

As a parent, you know your child best. You may be the first person to see a problem.

Your child ...

If your child shows some of these behaviors or has a sudden change in behavior, it is possible that your child might need help. Keep in mind that some behaviors can be normal at one age, but not at another. If you are not sure, you should contact your pediatrician or a health care provider listed in the booklet.



Pay attention if your child:

- Cannot sit still.

- Cries and cannot be calmed down.

- Is not interested in other children, toys, or exploring the world around him/her.

- Frequently hits, bites, kicks, and breaks things.

- Often is so quiet and withdrawn that you forget he or she is in the room.

- Is clingy and afraid of separating from you.

- Has frequent temper tantrums.

- Suddenly changes sleeping or eating patterns.

- Returns to earlier behaviors like thumb-sucking, bedwetting, and talking less.

- Purposely hurts his/her body.

- Is cruel to animals.

Getting help early can make a big difference for your child!

And you...

How you think, feel, and act affects your child. If you check some of the boxes below, this might be a sign of trouble. Your mental health is important too.



Pay attention to how YOU feel:

- Have you felt overwhelmed, down, sad, or hopeless lately?

- Have you felt little interest or pleasure in doing things that you usually enjoy?

- Have you had a change in eating or sleeping patterns (too much, too little)?

- Have you had trouble paying attention to what you are doing?

- Do you feel like crying a lot?

- Have you thought about hurting yourself or committing suicide?

- Do you always feel “stressed out” and worried?

- Have you noticed that you are not able to have fun with or take care of your child?

- Do you get angry or lose patience with your child too easily?

- Do you get so angry you feel like hitting your child?

- Are other people worried that you are drinking too much alcohol or abusing drugs?

To get help, you should call your doctor or one of the health care providers listed in this booklet.

Your Home

and the World Around You

Even babies and young children can feel, hear, and see the world around them. They will be affected by:

- Loud and violent arguments
- Gunshots and fights
- Inappropriate sexual contact
- Physical abuse
- Constant name calling and teasing
- Being around people who are abusing alcohol and drugs
- Unmet needs for food, clothing, medical attention, or sleep

Young children can be scared and feel sad because of:

- A death in the family
- Serious illness or injury
- Natural disasters
- Parents separating or divorcing
- Moving to a new home
- A change in caregiver



Babies and young children need to feel safe and loved.

Here are some things you can do that will help you raise a mentally healthy child:

- Make sure your child has a caring, helpful adult in his life.
- Help your child to do well and learn new things.
- Reward your child with praise for good behavior.
- Get medical help for your child when needed.
- Play with your child and give your love and attention.

Where to

get Help

These providers are just some of those available in Westchester County. Contact your doctor, child care provider, school district, local Head Start, or United Way 211 Helpline to learn about more providers near you.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Andrus Children's Center	County-wide offices	914-965-3700
Family Services of Westchester	County-wide offices	914-937-2320
The Guidance Center	New Rochelle	914-636-4440
Mental Health Association of Westchester	Mt. Kisco, Elmsford, White Plains	914-345-5900 x240
Westchester County Department of Health Early Intervention Program		914-813-5094
Westchester Jewish Community Services	Peekskill Harrison Yonkers	914-737-7338 914-949-7699 914-423-4433

HOSPITALS/HEALTH CENTERS

Behavioral Health Center Westchester County Medical Center	Valhalla	914-493-1829
Four Winds Hospital	Katonah	914-763-8151
White Plains Hospital Center Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health	White Plains	914-681-1078
St. Vincent's Hospital	Harrison	1-888-689-1684
Community Health Center	Greenburgh	914-989-7600
Hudson River Healthcare	Peekskill	914-734-8800
Mt. Vernon Neighborhood Health Center	Mt. Vernon	914-699-7200

Ossining Open Door	Ossining	914-941-1263
Port Chester Open Door	Port Chester	914-937-8899

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mt. Kisco Community Service Center		914-864-7101
Mt. Vernon Community Service Center		914-813-6220
Peekskill Community Service Center		914-862-5130
Yonkers Community Service Center		914-231-2925

EMERGENCY HOTLINE

Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program		914-493-7075
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Most of these services are available to you or your child regardless of your immigration or citizenship status. Programs accept different forms of payment and insurance. Call them to be sure, as services change.

For Health Insurance Access, call the County Helpline at 914-813-5629.