

Establishing mental health as a cornerstone of overall health.

KIDS Newsletter

Building Ohio's Future

Ohio

Department of
Mental Health

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Kay's Korner

How did it get to be November? Now that late autumn is upon us, and in the spirit of our November holiday, we take this opportunity to give thanks for our blessings. In this issue we will highlight three outstanding areas of blessings for Ohio's children, youth, young adults and families.



Our page four article features a new federal planning grant awarded to the Ohio Department of Mental Health to help Ohio address the needs of our youth and young adults with mental health challenges and

their families. We also are blessed with the voice of Rachel Regula, a young adult leader in Resiliency, who writes through the strength of her experience with advocacy to help peers address bullying issues.

And finally, we are blessed with the innovative collaborative effort of Ohio Family and Children First and the Ronald McDonald House of Cleveland, Inc. with the launch of a new website, RedTreehouse.org.

We wish you all a warm and wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with your family and friends.

Kay Rietz

**Chief, Office of Children, Families and Prevention,
Ohio Department of Mental Health**

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Youth Advocates For Mental Health

Peer Guidance to Address Bullying

By Rachel Regula, Youth Advocate

For many students all over Ohio, going back to school means going back to an unsafe environment filled with bullies from the previous year. Even with anti-bullying policies in place, bullies still find a way to outsmart the system. It is important for youth to know what to do when they are being bullied or see a classmate being bullied. It's important for them to take a stand and not let their classmates feel threatened and alone.



When youth are being bullied or see someone being bullied, it is important to talk to someone they trust, whether it is a parent, a teacher, a guidance counselor or even a lunch monitor. The adult they tell can try and make the situation better for you or your classmates. If a youth feels comfortable, suggest that they stand up for their classmate. All they have to do is tell the bully to stop.

Parents, it's important to look for the warning signs of bullying. If you notice your child's behavior changing or they start to talk about disliking school, discuss it. Your child may be scared to tell you if they are being bullied because they don't want to make it worse.

A great site for young people to explore is www.YouthAdvocatesforMentalHealth.org. It provides an opportunity for youth to connect with each other around common issues and concerns. Its mission is to provide peer-to-peer support through education and artistic expression for youth with mental health

issues. It's a great place to talk to others about what works when standing up to bullies. You can also find stories of resiliency, blog discussions for youth, polls on important topics, youth discussion live chat, youth stories, youth art, public service announcements, a suicide prevention Marvel comic, and other information and resources.

While bullying tactics are changing all the time, it's important for youth to know that they are not alone and that there are places where they can find support through their own peers!



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Building Peace, One Partner at a Time

Bullying Prevention Tips

Almost daily we read about and hear stories relating to the problem of bullying in our communities. And while there are a variety of ways in which bullying can and does occur, some aspects remain constant: Bullying is not restricted to a single incident or threat, but is usually a recurrent problem. What's more, acts of bullying can begin at a very early age, even before a child reaches school age.

There are many theories that explain why some children are more likely to become aggressive than others. Some researchers have explained such behavior by using the Deficit/Excess Theory. The Deficit Theory suggests that children are aggressive because they are lacking in some (or many) social skills, such as being able to control impulses. The Excess Theory suggests that children with very high levels of aggression or anger find it difficult to control bullying tendencies. (Schwartz, Dodge, and Cole, 1993).

It is essential that parents, teachers and leaders in youth-serving organizations learn about bullying and how to prevent it. Taking a proactive approach by having a tool kit of bullying prevention strategies at-the-ready, such as PeaceBuilders® First Aid for Anger, is key.

PeaceBuilders First Aid for Anger includes seven proven, on-the-spot strategies for redirecting anger, as follows:

Turn Down the Volume – Yelling or using a high-pitched voice says there is something to retreat from. Using a calm, lower-pitched voice gives adults authority without making threats.

Give Choices for Cooling Off – Giving a choice helps children and adolescents calm down. Telling someone to go someplace sounds like a threat and intensifies anger. Instead, you might say, "I see that you are angry. You can sit in the office or on the bleachers until we talk about this. Which do you choose?" Offering choices preserves the perception that the adult is in control but not threatening.

Acknowledge Anger – Down-playing the anger or telling children or adolescents that they should not be angry simply increases their frustration. A simple, calm acknowledgment of the anger actually helps defuse it. For example, you might say, "I can see that you're really angry. Are you ready to share your reasons for feeling angry?"

Use a "When...Then" Choice Instruction – For example, you might say, "When you are sitting in the chair and can speak to me in a calm voice, then we will figure out what needs





to be done." Direct commands like, "Sit down and tell me what happened!" feels threatening. A when...then instruction allows the young person to act in a positive way to work toward a goal.

Giving choices is giving respect. Giving choices also helps keep serotonin levels up and norepinephrine levels low. The structure of the instruction reduces the nonverbal cues that signal threat.

Walk and Talk – Walking and talking often works well for a child or adolescent who is very resistant. It also keeps them from feeling trapped. You might say, "Let's go for a walk and talk about this." During the walk, talk about how he or she might have felt. Offer some choices if the response is, "I don't know." Then shift into talking about options for the future.

Ask about Outcomes – "What bad things happened after _____ (what child or adolescent did)?" "If you had _____ (positive option) instead, what would have happened?" "If we practice a better way of handling the situation now, how much better will you be able to deal with it next time?" These questions are designed to help children and adolescents think through the options to solve problems for future behavior. Coaching a child or adolescent to think through the outcomes engages the frontal cortex of the brain where learning occurs.

Offer Choices for Penalty or for Making Amends – Future positive acts are more likely, and angry acts are less likely, if you offer a choice of penalty to the child or adolescent.

Say something like, "You can either write an apology note, or you can call to apologize and offer a way to right the wrong. Which do you choose?" Offering choices to make amends reduces the level of fear, lessening the chance that the victim will seek revenge, which would escalate aggression.

To learn more, visit www.peacebuilders.com or call toll free 1-877-473-2236.

Red Treehouse launches online space for families, professionals

A new website, www.RedTreehouse.org, is an easy-to-use, reference and referral resource. It is an online community where Ohio families and young adults can find events, trainings and activities. The site is designed to support families and professionals to help children and young adults (prenatal through age 25) meet daily needs, overcome challenges, and develop their fullest potential.

All local, regional, state and national disability organizations, public agencies, schools and universities, health care organizations, support groups, private providers, associations and philanthropic organizations are encouraged to join Red Treehouse to make important connections. Don't let your organization be left out! Registered organizations can:

- post events on the community calendar;
- provide a website link;
- build relationships across geographic locations; and
- have their information available 24/7 at no cost.

RedTreehouse.org is the result of a collaboration between Ronald McDonald House® of Cleveland, Inc. and Ohio Family and Children First and its Family Engagement Steering Committee, with support from many state and local agencies and organizations. For more information about Ohio Family and Children First, go to <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/>



Ohio receives strategic planning grant to engage youth in transition

By Kay Rietz, Chief, Office of Children, Families and Prevention, Ohio Department of Mental Health

Ohio's population of youth and young adults ages 14-21 totals 1,287,162, with more than 90,000 having serious emotional disturbances or serious mental illnesses during this important developmental stage in their lives. The Ohio Department of Mental Health has received a planning grant award to expand the *System of Care* for these individuals in transition (ages 14-21) and their families. The grant



from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will be used to help our youth succeed.

A "system of care" is an organizational philosophy and framework that creates a network

of effective community-based services and supports to improve the lives of youth with, or at risk of, serious mental health conditions. It supports youth and their families by building meaningful partnerships with them, addressing cultural and linguistic needs, and using evidence-based practices to help youth function better at home, in school, in the community and throughout life.

Ohio will use the one-year grant of \$772,095 toward Engaging the New Generation to Achieve their Goals through Empowerment (ENGAGE). The ENGAGE project will foster a one-year strategic-planning process to improve outcomes for transition age youth and young adults. The state leadership team will be guided by youth, young adults and families, as well as representatives from child- and adult-serving systems, including child welfare, juvenile justice, public health, education, developmental disabilities, rehabilitation services, housing and employment/vocational services.

Data from the national evaluation of the system of care program demonstrate how youth improve academically, behaviorally and emotionally between the date of entry into systems of care through 12 months of receiving services. During their first year of services, most youth (about 84 percent) had either been promoted to the next grade level, received the GED (high school equivalency diploma) or were attending college or vocational school.

During this coming year, we look forward to working with Ohio youth, young adults and family leaders, and our state intersystem partners, behavioral health advocates and providers, to develop a system of care that responds to the behavioral needs and life goals of Ohio's transition-age youth as we ENGAGE them in better outcomes.



John R. Kasich, Governor
Tracy J. Plouck, Director

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The mission of the Ohio Department of Mental Health is the promotion and establishment of mental health as a cornerstone of health and wellness for individuals, families and communities throughout Ohio.

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