



D C E V E R E S T
Middle
S C H O O L

DCE MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

Dear D.C. Everest Middle School Parents/Guardians,

It has been a pleasure getting to know our students this year and we are making every effort to ensure their experiences are positive, challenging and engaging. We appreciate your support as it plays a valuable role in your child's success as they continue to learn and grow at D.C.E. Middle School.

We want to make you aware that the DCEMS Student Services and Administrative team have noticed an increase in the mental health needs of our students this year. To help our families support their students, we are providing you with some helpful information from mental health experts about how you can be an effective observer of your child's mental health, how to have honest conversations with them about how they're feeling, and ways that you can assist your child. We hope you find this information of value as you navigate the adolescent and teen years. We welcome you to contact our school counselors if you have additional concerns or questions you would like addressed.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN YOUR ADOLESCENT/TEEN

- They've lost interest in things they used to enjoy.
- They have low energy.
- They stay up late/all night checking their social media accounts.
- They sleep too much or too little, or seem sleepy throughout the day.
- Their hygiene changes for the worst (not taking care of themselves).
- They are spending more and more time alone, and avoid social activities with friends or family.
- They diet or exercise excessively, or fear gaining weight.
- They engage in self-harm behaviors (such as cutting or burning their skin). These are often hidden from view.
- They smoke/vape, drink alcohol, or use drugs.
- They engage in risky or destructive behavior alone or with friends.
- They have thoughts of suicide or "just not being here anymore."
- They talk, write about, watch or listen to dark or macabre things.
- They have periods of highly elevated energy and activity, and require much less sleep than usual.
- They say that they think someone is trying to control their mind or that they hear things other people cannot hear.
- They've just changed and you are concerned.

WHAT YOU AS PARENTS/GUARDIANS CAN DO TO FIND OUT HOW YOUR CHILD IS FEELING

- **Ask them how they are doing, but be ready to follow up with open-ended questions.** For example, “How was your day?” may get a response of, “Fine,” “Okay,” “Good,” or “Don’t know.” You can follow up with, “What was “fine” about it? Tell me more. What do you mean by “okay”? What does “good” look like for you at school?”
- **You can ask about specific classes, friends, interests, activities, etc.** Follow up with them if you know there is something happening that day (e.g., a test, a tryout, a presentation).
- **You can ask about current events and ask what they think and how they feel about them.** Don’t be afraid to ask your child difficult questions — it shows you care and are interested in their feelings, thoughts, and opinions. They might open up to you about other things they worry about. Tell them what you think about that current event and how you feel — it lets them know your values as a parent/guardian.
- **On that same note, it is okay to shield your child from being exposed to everything in the news!** Although it’s likely they know some of the things happening in the world, it is okay to protect them from the 24-hour news feeds that seem to report only negative or scary things.
- **Help them feel connected to family, school, or other [organizations](#).**

IF YOU HAVE OBSERVED SOME OF THE ABOVE “SIGNS” OF MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- **Start with an “I’ve noticed” statement.**
 - I’ve noticed you haven’t been eating much at dinner. Is something bothering you? This concerns me because sometimes we lose our appetites when we’re depressed or worried. Have you been feeling that way?
 - I’ve noticed you no longer hang out with _____. Did something happen between you two? How do you feel about that? Who do you hang out with now? What do you like about them?
 - I’ve noticed you don’t smile or laugh much anymore, and I’m worried about you. Tell me what has changed for you.
 - I’ve noticed you aren’t getting your schoolwork done or turned in on time. This isn’t like you. Can you help me understand what’s different (what’s changed, why that might be)?
- **You can always let them know that the “I’ve noticed” statement is because you are concerned about them and their mental health.** Being an adolescent and teen is not easy. There is a lot of pressure on our children to fit in, to handle pressure well, to be/act/look a certain way. Even if you do not place any pressure on your child, they may feel it from other places.
- **Share some of your teen stories with them to let them know you understand.** It’s always helpful to let your child know that you experienced some of these emotions and challenges at their age.
- **Be honest with your child about what you know and don’t know about them and their generation.** Acknowledge the difficulty of being an adolescent/teen in this generation (because it’s tough!). Let them know you may not understand everything they are going through nor the pressures they may be feeling, but you are here to listen to them.
- **Reach out to teachers and school staff to get more information about what they may be observing with your child (changes in attitude, friends, work/grades, demeanor (emotions)).** The changes you see in your child at home may be seen by teachers as well. **Reach out to your child’s school counselor as well.**

- **Help to eliminate the stigma for mental health support.** If you were sick or injured, you would go to the doctor. If your mental health is suffering, you see a specialist (counselor, therapist, psychologist). Talk openly with your child about this analogy and that it is OKAY to talk to someone about how you're feeling. It's normal and healthy to talk to someone about your thoughts and feelings.
- **Is it a mental health concern or is this normal adolescent/teen behavior?** It's hard to tell. Nonetheless, it's important to talk to your child so you can support them either way. Read an article about this [here](#).

WHAT TO DO AND WHO TO CALL

If you feel your child would benefit from counseling, the Marathon County Counseling Consortium has professional therapists in almost every building in the area school districts. At DCEMS, the therapist who is assigned to our building is Andrew McGregor from Charis Counseling. Charis accepts all insurance, and financial assistance can be requested. There are many other local counseling agencies, and some parents' insurance plans offer free Employee Assistance Programs to their employees and families. Be sure to check yours.

- [Charis Counseling](#) - **715-848-0525** (to set up a meeting with Andrew McGregor)
- [Choosing a Counselor](#) informational brochure
- **1-800-273-8255** - Suicide Hotline (National; available 24/7)
 - <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
 - Text line **741741** (National; available 24/7)
- **1-800-799-0122** - [North Central Health Care Center](#) Crisis Line (Wausau)
- **1-715-845-4326** - North Central Health Care Center Crisis Line (Wausau)

DCE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT SERVICES TEAM

- **Dianna Reinardy**, 6th grade School Counselor: 715-241-9700 **x2026**
 - dreinardy@dce.k12.wi.us
- **Mike Wolfe**, 7th grade School Counselor: 715-241-9700 **x2311**
 - mwolfe@dce.k12.wi.us
- **Savanna Krueger**, School Nurse: 715-241-9700 **x2207**
- **Officer Abby Behnke**: 715-241-9700 **x2306**
- **Kelsey Parkin**, School Social Worker: 715-241-9700 **x2309**
- **Brandon Lauersdorf**, School Psychologist: 715-241-9700 **x2025**

<https://medlineplus.gov/teenmentalhealth.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/mental-health/index.htm>