MENTAL HEALTH AMONG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS BEGIN IN EARLY LIFE

A mental health condition is a broad term that encompasses neurodevelopmental, emotional, and behavioral disorders.

Bullying, sexual violence, and other forms of trauma are risk factors for mental health conditions among both the victims and the perpetrators

Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health conditions among adolescents

Adolescents need peer support. Social isolation, which many experienced during school closures throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, can have a profound impact on adolescent wellbeing

Children with mental health conditions require support from their families, communities, and from the educational and health systems.

An estimated **1 in 7** adolescents globally experience mental health conditions, but many are not diagnosed or provided care in a timely manner (Source: UNICEF 2021)

50% of mental health conditions among adults emerge by age 14 (Source: Kessler et al. 2007)

Suicide is the **4th** leading cause of death among adolescents and youth between the ages of 15–29 years (Source: WHO 2021)

SCHOOLS CAN SUPPORT STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental health conditions emerge during the years when children and adolescents are attending school, which presents an opportunity for the school system to provide emotional support, identify possible conditions, and take action.

Cultivate safe learning environments by:

- Promoting a positive and inclusive learning environment and community
- Modeling positive mental and physical health behaviors, including supporting and validating students' feelings
- Reporting the maltreatment of children

Approximately 1 in 3 adolescents experience bullying and physical violence (Source: UNESCO 2019)

20% School-based anti-bullying programs can reduce bullying by about 20% (Source: Ttofi and Farington 2011)

Raise awareness of mental health by:

- Training teachers and other school personnel on mental health and wellbeing
- Providing universal life skills programs to build students' socio-emotional competencies, reduce risk taking behaviors, and improve academic performance.

Ethiopia's National Mental Health Strategy includes a focus on school-based mental health, including integrating mental health into existing school health programming and training teachers to provide social skills training and basic counseling. (Source: Government of Ethiopia)

Detect and support students experiencing a spectrum of mental health conditions by:

- Establishing safe spaces and offering school-based counseling services
- Recognizing, responding to, and making appropriate referrals, where possible, for students with suspected mental health conditions
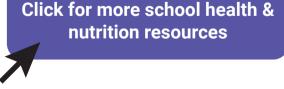
Schools are a common venue for delivering mental health promotion and prevention programs, with programs offered in approximately half of all countries worldwide (Source: WHO 2021)

$ → $$$$ Supporting anxiety and depression has a high return on investment: every $1 spent yields $4 in returns (Source: Chisholm et al. 2016)

Click for more school health & nutrition resources

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