Loving God, you are always near to us, especially when we are troubled and experiencing distress. Reach out to those who experience mental health challenges. Lift their burdens, calm their anxiety, and quiet their fears. Surround them with your healing presence that they may know that they are not alone.

We are well aware that recently there has been a rapid and intense increase in mental health problems in our society, especially among young people - young adults, teenagers and children.

This development has been well-documented by physicians and mental-health experts. It is a deep concern for all of us.

I am convinced, however, that the faith community, the Church, has a unique role to play in responding to this crisis. We have professional, pastoral and spiritual gifts we can bring to help support and heal the wounded and frightened members of our community. And, as always, we trust that our human efforts will be complemented by the powerful grace and unfailing compassion of our Heavenly Father.

May our Blessed Mother Mary, who never fails to assist her children, and St. Dymphna, the patron saint of mental health, accompany us as together we begin this journey of healing and peace."
SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

The Youth Mental Wellness Task Force of the Diocese of Providence was established by Bishop Thomas J. Tobin in 2022 to address the growing mental health crisis among young persons. Its mission is to identify and recommend resources and supports to assist our diocesan schools, parishes, and institutions in promoting the well-being of the young persons whom we serve.

Mental health is an essential part of overall health. Young persons who experience mental health challenges need support, compassion, and care. Although increasing prior to the pandemic, rates of psychological distress among young persons have escalated during the past two years since the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory Report (2021), recent national surveys of young persons have shown an alarming increase in the prevalence of youth mental health difficulties, especially symptoms of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation. Moreover, rates of suicide among young persons have increased dramatically in recent years.

Mental health conditions can cause much distress for young persons and their families. Fortunately, there are resources and supports available to help.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Young persons may benefit from professional assessment and treatment if they are presenting some or all of the following difficulties:

- Appearance, depressed, and/or anxious much of the time
- Emotional distress, tearfulness, anger, irritability
- Expresses sense of hopelessness, pessimism
- Negative, critical statements about self and/or others
- Sudden, unpredictable changes in mood or behavior
- Difficulties with concentration, confusion, disorientation
- Persistent worries or fears
- Regularity reports not feeling well; complaints of physical pain, headache, stomach ache
- Difficulties with fitting in or getting along with others
- Persistent sense of loneliness, increased social withdrawal, isolation
- Decreased interest in and/or motivation to activities, homework, or other activities
- Difficulty coping with normal activities
- Talk about possible self-harm

According to the National Institute of Mental Health guidelines, it is advisable to consider seeking help if the young person’s challenging behaviors and emotions persist for a few weeks or longer, cause distress for the individual and/or the family, or interfere with the individual’s functioning at home, school, or socially.

Seek immediate help for possible warning signs for suicidal thoughts or plans, including:

- Makes statements and/or writes about death or suicide
- Experience of recent significant loss, trauma, abuse, or bullying
- Comments about feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless; no reason for living
- Recent exposure to the suicide of others
- A history of suicide in the family, or previous suicide attempts; easy access to firearms
- Reckless behavior or engaging in risky activities; increase in alcohol and drug use
- Social withdrawal from family, friends, community; isolation
- Dramatic mood changes
- Persistent sense of hopelessness, increased social withdrawal, isolation
- Expression of recent significant loss, trauma, abuse, or bullying
- Difficulties with concentration, confusion, disorientation
- Persistent worries or fears
- Difficulties with fitting in or getting along with others
- Persistent sense of loneliness, increased social withdrawal, isolation
- Decreased interest in and/or motivation to activities, homework, or other activities
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- Talk about possible self-harm

NATIONAL Immediate Support

- Parents Helping Parents
  Parental Stress Line: (900) 632-8188

- Hopeline
  Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  Call (877) 235-4525
  Text HOME to 741741

- National Institute of Mental Health
  Call Center - 24/7 access to support
  (877) 235-4525

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  (CDC): Children’s Mental Health - Website: cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
  Kids, Teens, and Young Adults.
  (nami.org)

- National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM)
  Youth Mental Health Resources.

- Protecting Youth Mental Health
  The U.S. House of Representatives’ Advisory (2021)

LOCAL Immediate Support

- Butler Hospital Behavioral Health Services
  Call Center 24/7 access to support (844) 430-2371

- BioLink - For confidential support call 1(800) 469-8503, text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

- Kids Link RI
  24/7 crisis care for children and adolescents
  (800) 543-5465

- The Samaritans of Rhode Island
  (877) 870-4673

- The Lord is close to the brokenhearted saves those whose spirit is crushed
  Psalm 34: 18-20

- The Youth Mental Wellness Task Force
  Website: samaritansri.org

- (401) 272-4044 or (800) 365-4044

- (800) 365-4044 or (855) 543-5465

- (844) 401-0111

- Kids, Teens, and Young Adults
  (nami.org)

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