



Wear a Green Ribbon for Children's Mental Health Awareness!

We urge you to attend a children's mental health awareness event in your community, and wear a green ribbon. Wear a green ribbon to work. Wear a green ribbon to school. Wear a green ribbon to church. Wear a green ribbon to the supermarket.

The green ribbon brings awareness to the needs of the families of children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and social challenges across the nation.

The goals of Children's Mental Health Week are:

- To raise awareness of effective programs for children's mental health needs.
- To demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote positive youth development, recovery, and resilience.
- To show how children with mental health needs thrive in their communities.

Why Green?

To Combat Stigma!

In the 1800's, the color green was used to brand people who were labeled "insane." The children's mental health community decided to continue using the color green, but to connote a new, refreshing meaning.

Green signifies new life, new growth, and new beginnings.

Therefore, we wear green ribbons to raise public awareness, better the lives of children with serious emotional challenges and show our support of these children and their families.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2 - 8, 2010

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

Did you know?

- It has been estimated that almost 21 percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental or addictive challenge associated with at least minimum impairment.
- Despite the prevalence of mental challenges in the nation's children, 79% of children aged 6 to 17 with mental challenges do not receive mental health care. Uninsured children have a higher rate of unmet need than children with public or private insurance.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death of youth aged 15 to 24 in New York State.
- Anxiety disorders, mood disorders (e.g. depression or bipolar), and disruptive disorders (e.g. attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder) are the most common mental challenges among children.
- Gaps in services for youth and families are often due to a lack of community-based and inpatient mental health services.
- Drop-out and incarceration rates for children labeled emotionally disturbed are higher than that of any other disability.
- Stigma prevents many families from seeking help. Too often, families are blamed for their child's challenges; or fear that once identified, a mental health diagnosis will influence the way a child is treated.

There is Hope! **Wellness, Recovery and Resiliency are Possible.**

The treatment success rate for children's mental health challenges is 80%. Children are best served by early intervention, which can prevent them from being placed in more costly forms of treatment later on. In addition to early intervention, family-driven care and family support are culturally competent means proven to help children and youth with emotional, social and behavioral challenges.

Sources: Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, National Institute of Mental Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

SEEKING HELP

When and Where to Seek Help

Parents and family members are usually the first to notice if a child has problems with emotions or behavior. Your observations, along with those of teachers and other caregivers, may lead you to seek help for your child.

If you suspect a problem or have questions, consult your pediatrician, family physician or a mental health professional. For information and referral regarding the types of services that are available for children, contact Families Together in New York State at (888) 326-8644, info@ftnys.org or visit www.ftnys.org.

Common Warning Signs a Child May Need Help:

- Severe decline in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Recurring thoughts of suicide or death
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Depression, sadness or irritability
- Hyperactivity or fidgeting
- Irregular eating patterns
- Rapidly changing or extreme mood swings
- Substance use
- Repeated refusal to go to school or take part in normal children's activities

Fear & Anxiety

It is okay for children to feel afraid sometimes. At some point in our lives, we are all afraid of something. Fear and anxiety stem from experiences we do not understand.

If your child has fears that will not go away and affect his or her behavior, the first step is to find out what is frightening them. Be loving, patient and reassuring, not critical. Remember: the fear may be very real to the child.

Signs of Fear

- Nervous mannerisms, shyness, withdrawal and aggressive behavior may be signs of childhood fears.
- A change in normal eating and sleeping patterns may also signal an unhealthy fear. Children who "play sick" or feel anxious regularly may have some problems that need attention.
- Fear of school can occur following a stressful event such as moving to a new neighborhood, changing schools, or after a bad incident at school.
- Children may not want to go to school after a period of being at home because of a challenge.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

ANTI-STIGMA: DO YOU KNOW THE FACTS?

Stigma is not just the use of the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect. It is the use of negative labels to identify a child living with mental health needs. Stigma is a barrier and discourages families from getting the help they need due to the fear of being discriminated against.

Do you know Stigma:

- Results in inadequate insurance coverage for mental health services?
- Results in fear, mistrust, and violence against families and children living with mental health needs?
- Results in families and friends turning their backs on people with mental health needs?
- Keeps people from getting needed mental health services and that people would rather tell employers they have committed a petty crime and were in jail, than admit to being in a psychiatric hospital?

Anti-Stigma Dos & Don'ts

Do:

- Use respectful language that puts the child first, such as:
 - Child with emotional, behavioral, or social needs
 - Child who has schizophrenia
 - Child with special mental health needs
 - Child who has bipolar disorder
- Emphasize abilities and strengths, not limitations.
- Tell someone if they express a stigmatizing attitude. **Education and awareness are the most important actions toward eliminating stigma!**

Don't:

- Portray successful children with disabilities as super human.
- Use generic labels such as retarded, or the mentally ill.
- Use terms like crazy, lunatic, manic-depressive, slow functioning, or normal.

Always Remember:

- Every child's mental health is important. Many children have mental health problems.
- These problems are real *and* painful.
- Mental health problems can be recognized and successfully treated.
- By working together, caring families and communities can help.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

Ten Tips for Organizing an Effective Awareness Campaign

1. **Gather** a group of great people to make up your team. Include people who have shown dedication to the issue of children's mental health as well as people with lots of contacts and energy.
2. **Schedule** regular meetings and set goals early.
3. **Determine** what your message will be and to whom you will be sending the message; suggestion: everyone on your mailing list, local schools, county departments, community centers, hospitals, and pediatricians.
4. **Brainstorm** your ideas - ask the "Magic Wand Question" (What would you see happening if you had a magic wand and no obstacles?) No ideas are bad ideas.
5. **Prioritize** - as a group. Set goals and then discuss what steps (objectives) you need to take to accomplish those goals.
6. **Become task-centered** - break down the objectives and decide if an individual can manage it or if a team approach is needed. Then assign the tasks.
7. **Create a timeline** and if you have e-mail abilities set up a distribution list to keep everyone updated on the progress.
8. **Spread the word** – send a press release or call members of the media (TV and newspaper reporters and editors).
9. **Support** each other by keeping in touch with participants. Encourage them to stay on target with the timeline. If someone is having trouble with a task offer help.
10. **Participate in your Children's Mental Health Week activity**, and celebrate it at a follow up meeting. Discuss how things went, what to improve on next year. Do not forget to set the date for your next planning meeting to begin the process for next year. Each year it gets easier!

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Structured Educational Activities

- Children's & Teens' Perspectives - discussions through drawings and stories.
- Workshops for parents, caregivers, and providers.
- Regional or local educational conferences.
- Special topic forums or roundtable discussions in the community.
- Mental Health Fairs with depression and anxiety screenings.
- Special topic high school assembly with speaker.
- Video presentations with discussion.
- School announcements by students.

Informational Activities

- Green ribbon awareness. Word of mouth is key!
- Childhood depression and anxiety screening held at community centers, hospitals, malls, etc.
- Information fairs.
- Seedling Project – present each Legislative representative with a packet of information on children's mental health issues and a tree seedling as a reminder that we rely on them to help our children grow up healthy.
- Organization or support program open house.
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs) or Press Release.
- Modify the Official Proclamation to use in your community.
- Write an op/ed or letter to the editor for your local newspaper.
- Brown bag lunch series on various learning disabilities, mental health diagnoses, community services, medication education, etc.

Artistic Expression/Recreational Activities

- Essay and poster contests for children & youth.
- Puppet shows emphasizing sensitivity to disabilities.
- Teen or group art murals.
- Family concert.
- "Express Yourself Tees"- t-shirts created by children and youth.
- Movie night. Pick a movie that will bring sensitivity and understanding to a disability and follow with discussion.
- Open mike poetry session for teens and/or parents.
- Teen improvisational or theatre group show.
- Book reading contest - ask local/school library to display their collection of books on disabilities.
- "Be A Mentor Day" or "Be A Buddy Day"... encourage the internal assets of *caring* and *helping* individuals with disabilities through this activity.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

CHILDREN'S OR YOUTH ESSAY OR POSTER CONTEST

Why?

- We want to teach our children the values of caring, tolerance, responsibility, and sensitivity to others, in this case those with emotional and behavioral disabilities.
- Children tug at our heartstrings and teach us. What is the expression - "Out of the mouths of babes"?
- By heightening the awareness of our youth, we encourage youth to be caring, if we have caring youth we will have caring adults.

Where?

- At school, church, community center, residential facility, libraries, or through your family support program, for example.
- Display the work of children, youth and family members at schools, local stores, malls, libraries, a special event you are holding, a community or civic centers, or city hall...the possibilities are endless.

When?

- Start your planning now!
- May 2-8, 2010 - display the entries at the venue you selected.

How?

- Dream Big - start with your ideal event and work from there on the real possibilities.
- Identify key stakeholders in your community and invite them to get involved.
- Find a business to donate supplies and prizes. You need to sell businesses on what is in it for them, so have a plan as to how you will recognize the donating businesses. Give yourself enough time for donations. Sometimes asking at the local level requires getting permission from state/national offices and that takes time.
- Find a busy place to display the posters, and a newspaper to print the essays (or at least the winning essays) and plan an event. The store donating supplies may also agree to display posters and/or essays.
- Get the media involved...ask a person like a local TV/radio person, local celebrity, elected official, or school superintendent to announce the winners and give out awards at your event. Having a local celebrity would attract the attention of the media. The local media may agree to interview the winners as well as provide them the opportunity to read their essay.
- Have a lot of informational materials on children's mental health at your event.
- Think about turning those essays or posters into books or calendars for a fundraiser for your program (*don't forget to get parents permission to use their children's work*).

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2010

IMPORTANT RESOURCE LINKS

Families Together in New York State is a non-profit, family-run organization that strives to establish a unified voice for children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and social challenges. Our mission is to ensure that every family has access to needed information, support, and services.

For Information & Referral call Families Together in New York State toll-free at (888) 326-8644 or visit www.ftnys.org for important links and resources.

Information on planning Children's Mental Health Week events

www.ffcmh.org

Purchasing green ribbons

www.childrensmentalhealthawarenessweek.org

Information on National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week 2010

www.tapartnership.org.

A Family Guide To Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy & Drug Free—a public education Web site developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to communicate to parents and other caring adults about how they can help promote their child's mental health and reduce his or her risk for becoming involved with alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

<http://www.family.samhsa.gov>

New York State Office of Mental Health's Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness Kit (SPEAK)—is an information kit for the public, health care providers and educators to help them understand the terrible frequency and toll of suicide, and to discover ways and methods to aid in preventing it.

<http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/speak/index.htm>

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

Proclamation Letter

Outreach Letter to Schools

Press Release

Media Advisory

PSA Pitch Letter

Awareness Day Scripts for TV and/or Radio

Save the Date Postcards

CMHW Posters

*Template for Official Proclamation for
Children's Mental Health Week
(please modify for use in your own local community)*

**(Official's Name)'s 2010
Proclamation for Children's Mental Health Week**

Whereas, promoting and supporting the mental health and well-being of children and their families is a significant issue for all citizens of New York, and Children's Mental Health Week is a time to focus on the needs of children and families while celebrating what they have accomplished; and

Whereas, it is important for service providers to engage and partner with families and youth, both at the service delivery level with respect to their own children, and at the policy-making level, to assure effectiveness of treatment and the achievement of positive outcomes; and

Whereas, research has shown that prevention, early identification, and intervention for emotional, social and behavioral challenges for young children through adolescence offer the best opportunity for positive outcomes; and

Whereas, the reduction of mental health symptoms is one aspect of successful treatment, and the achievement of developmental milestones and experiences that reinforce resiliency are integral for preparing youth to be successful adults; and

Whereas, collaboration and integration across all child-serving systems at the state and local levels are essential for increased access to mental health services and supports, reduction of duplicated services, maximization of resources and assurance of effective service provision; and

Whereas, enhanced training opportunities for workers serving children and their families on social and emotional development, evidence-based practices, and core competencies are essential for improving outcomes; and

Whereas, these values form the foundation for a comprehensive, statewide, cross-systems plan for Children's Mental Health, developed with input from service stakeholders, advocates, family members and youth representatives; we recognize the potential for improving our children's system of care and celebrate Children's Mental Health Week with a renewed sense of optimism and hope;

Now, Therefore, I, *(name, title of county/municipality)* do hereby proclaim **May 2-8, 2010** as

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK
in *(Your County/Municipality)*

G i v e n under my hand and the Privy Seal of the
(Your County/Municipality) this
_____ in the year two thousand ten.

Sample Outreach Letter to Schools

Date

Name and Title

School

Address

Address

Dear

Did you know that May is Mental Health Month?

For many years the first full week in May has been designated Children's Mental Health Week and the first Tuesday of Children's Mental Health Week celebrates National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. The 2010 Children's Mental Health Week theme, as declared by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is *Promoting Positive Mental Health from Birth to Adulthood*. During Children's Mental Health Week (May 2nd - May 8th, 2010), and especially on National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (May 6th, 2010), thousands of people across our nation will wear green ribbons to symbolize their commitment to children's mental health. The green ribbon reminds us that children and adolescents can and do experience mental health issues, that treatment is available, and that treatment helps.

Traditionally, communities have come together during this important time by hosting such events as poster contests, school based distribution of green ribbons and mental health facts, greeting cards, bookmarks, mall information tables, newspaper articles, green ribbon crafts, public service announcements, educational workshops and conferences and official proclamations to name just a few.

Community High Schools, Middle Schools, and Universities can help raise public awareness concerning child and adolescent mental health issues. Many schools distribute green ribbons to their student body some time. Often the ribbons are parceled out for homerooms by a volunteer student group. The night before distribution the student volunteers place the appropriate number of ribbons in homeroom teachers mail slots. On the morning of distribution – the symbolism of the green ribbon is explained over the PA while homeroom teachers distribute the ribbons to students, asking them to wear a green ribbon for the remainder of the day. Our youth can have a voice, and that voice can make a difference.

For more information about National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day and how you and your student body can help, please contact me at _____ . I have also enclosed a list of websites you may visit for additional details and ideas.

Thank you for all you do for our children!

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Insert Date

Families and Local Organization to Recognize National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day and Children's Mental Health Week
(***or, announce your event, something about green ribbons, etc.***)

Your City, N.Y. – Date – Your Organization, a non-profit, family-run organization that strives to establish a unified voice for children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and social challenges (***or, insert your mission***), is pleased to announce that the first-ever National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day will take place on May 6th, 2010. This monumental day falls during Children's Mental Health Week, which mental health organizations nationwide have celebrated every first full week in May, which takes place from May 2nd – 8th this year. The 2010 Children's Mental Health Week theme, as declared by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is *Promoting Positive Mental Health from Birth to Adulthood*.

You can insert information about an event—if you will be holding one—here.

The goal of these events (***or, this event***) is to elevate awareness of children's mental health issues with the hope of encouraging early diagnosis and treatment. Another goal is to eliminate the stigma associated with children's mental health. Stigma is a barrier and discourages families from getting the help they need due to the fear of being discriminated against or judged.

Insert a quote here from your executive director or board president, ex. “Many parents feel blamed and shamed for their child's disability when it is related to mental health.” said Mary Sunshine, executive director of Super Families, Inc.

Suggested: All organizations and families involved are encouraged to wear a green ribbon to signify support and bring awareness. The green ribbon was chosen by the mental health community to signify new life, new growth, and new beginnings. In the 1800's, the color green was used to label people as “insane;” now we are striving to overcome this negative stigma and focus on support, families, and overall mental health.

Your organization name is a chapter of *Families Together in New York State*.

Families Together in New York State, Inc. is a non-profit family-run organization which strives to establish a unified voice for children and youth with emotional, behavioral and social challenges. *Families Together* works to ensure every family has access to information, support and services. Based in Albany, New York, *Families Together* has ten Chapters across New York State. For more information, visit the organizational website at www.ftnys.org, or contact info@ftnys.org.

Sample Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[DATE]

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name, Title
Phone Number
Email

[YOUR PROGRAM'S NAME] To Host National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Event on May 6

[Name of Event] Part of Nationwide Effort To Showcase Children, Youth, and Families Thriving in the Community

[CITY, State]—To kick off May is Mental Health Month, **[YOUR PROGRAM'S NAME]** will participate in National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 6. **[NAME OF EVENT]** will **[DESCRIBE EVENT]**.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that in 2006, 21 percent of youth aged 12 to 17 received treatment or counseling for emotional or behavioral problems in the previous year. It is likely that a similar percentage in **[TOWN, CITY, COUNTY, OR STATE]** also have serious mental health needs. Through innovative approaches, **[YOUR PROGRAM'S NAME]** helps meet the mental health needs of **[NUMBER]** children, youth, and families. National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is an opportunity for the community to better understand the value of its investment in innovative approaches to meeting the mental health needs of children, youth, and families. The 2010 Children's Mental Health Week theme, as declared by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is *Promoting Positive Mental Health from Birth to Adulthood*.

Underscoring how communities can help children, youth, and families thrive, **[EXPLAIN WHAT YOUR PROGRAM DOES]**

WHO: [INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT ANY KEY SPEAKERS OR ORGANIZATIONS PLANNING TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES HERE]

WHAT: [INSERT DESCRIPTION OF AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES HERE]

WHEN: [INSERT DATE AND TIME OF YOUR AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES HERE]

WHERE: [INSERT LOCATION OF YOUR AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES HERE]

***Your organization name** is a chapter of Families Together in New York State.*

Families Together in New York State, Inc. is a non-profit family-run organization which strives to establish a unified voice for children and youth with emotional, behavioral and social challenges. Families Together works to ensure every family has access to information, support and services.

Headquartered in Albany, New York, Families Together has ten Chapters across New York State. For more information, visit the organizational website at www.ftnys.org, or contact info@ftnys.org.

Sample PSA Pitch Letter

Dear [NAME OF PUBLIC SERVICE DIRECTOR]:

Being a parent or guardian is one of life's most demanding roles. Those who are caring for children or youth with mental health needs face a variety of challenges many people cannot even imagine—not the least of which is figuring out where to turn for the services these children need. Fortunately, services and supports are available to children and youth with mental health needs—and their families—in New York State. Since 1993, Families Together in New York State has worked diligently to provide access to information and resources for families of children and youth with emotional, social and behavioral challenges across the State of New York. We have worked in collaboration with state agencies and other organizations to pass Timothy's Law for health insurance parity in December 2006, and contributed to the permanency of Timothy's Law in 2009. We have 10 ten regional Chapters across the state, many of which are systems of care, serving thousands of families through advocacy, family support, training and education, information and referral, and public awareness.

On Sunday, May 2, **YOUR ORGANIZATION** will be joining other children's mental health initiatives across the country to kick off May is Mental Health Month, and Children's Mental Health Week (May 2 – May 8); and celebrate their collaborative achievements through National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, May 6, 2010. The 2010 Children's Mental Health Week theme, as declared by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is *Promoting Positive Mental Health from Birth to Adulthood*.

In observance of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, we have prepared scripts for live-read public service announcements that we encourage you to run during the month of May. We have enclosed the PSA scripts and will contact you within the week to see if we can schedule a convenient time to meet about National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, as well as the critical issues surrounding the care of children, youth, and families with mental health needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I hope you will help us celebrate National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week by running a series of the enclosed PSAs.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

Awareness Day Scripts

The following Awareness Day scripts are examples you can tailor to your program's activities. They are based on a fairly simple formula that will appeal to public service directors:

- Start by explaining the issue and how it affects your local community.
- Describe how your program addresses the issue.
- Promote the special activities taking place on Awareness Day, May 6.
- Repeat the date and location of the event. Because people are usually doing something else while they are listening to the radio (driving, for example), they might miss the information the first time. So it is always a good idea to repeat it if time permits, as it does in the 60-second version.
- Include the phone number for listeners who might not be able to attend the event but may want to contact your program later.

Depending on the type of activity you plan for your program, you might want to structure the PSA entirely differently. If you plan a fundraising walk for children with mental health needs, for example, you might want to open the PSA with that information. You might even ask the radio station to help you write the PSA. If you write your own, here are some points to keep in mind:

Radio PSAs, like radio commercials, are available in blocks of time. The preferred lengths are 60 seconds, 30 seconds, 15 seconds, and 10 seconds.

Radio announcers usually read at a rate of 2½ to 3 words per second. That means a 60-second PSA should contain 150–180 words, a 30-second PSA should contain 75–90 words, and a 15-second PSA should contain 38–45 words. To get a good idea of whether the PSA will fit into the allotted time, read it out loud at an even, deliberate pace, and time it with a stop watch or the second hand on your watch.

Keep it simple. Avoid the temptation to include too much information. Because people typically retain only a portion of what they hear, it is a good idea to repeat important information, such as the date, type of activity, and location.

Example 60-Second National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Script

You might know a young person with a serious mental health need—an honor roll student, a star athlete, or a talented artist—and not even know it. On May 6, you can learn about how these young people are thriving in [NAME OF TOWN, CITY, OR STATE]—and the systems and supports that help them. On May 6, [NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM] will sponsor National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. It will showcase the strengths of our young people in [NAME OF TOWN, CITY, OR STATE], as well as the work of [AWARENESS DAY PARTNERS] who provide services and supports to these young people and their families. Join us at [TIME] on May 6, at [LOCATION]. Call [TELEPHONE NUMBER] or visit [WEB SITE].

Example 30-Second National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Script

You may know young people with mental health needs and not realize it. In fact, some of [TOWN'S, CITY'S, OR STATE'S] most talented children and youth are supported by vital local programs. Join us on May 6 when [NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM] sponsors National Children's Mental Health

Awareness Day. Learn about programs that help young people with mental health needs thrive. Call **[TELEPHONE NUMBER]**. Visit **[WEB SITE]**.

Example 15-Second National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Script

On May 6, see how **[NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM]** helps young people with mental health needs. Join us for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day at **[LOCATION]**. Call **[TELEPHONE NUMBER]** or visit **[WEB SITE]** for details.