

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH
PROMOTION
TOOLKIT
KNOW THE FACTS



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION TOOLKIT KNOW THE FACTS

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse has developed this Toolkit as part of "Prevention in a Box" to bring relevant information about children's mental health to individuals, families, practitioners, and other key community stakeholders. The Commission on Substance Abuse is dedicated to empowering our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free. Recognizing the consequences of substance abuse and mental health conditions among Broward County youth and adults, the Commission seeks to distribute accurate information and resources that promote health and wellness.

The Commission strives to build individual, family, and community competence and capacity for lasting positive social change. **Today, the majority of youth and adults in Broward County report emotional well-being.** The Commission, therefore, encourages all individuals to read, review, and utilize this toolkit in its entirety.

Sincerely,



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Mission

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse's mission is to **empower our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free.**

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CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health promotion in children begins with understanding mental health challenges that can occur among youth.

Mental health challenges among children can occur within early childhood growth and development.

Sometimes mental health conditions in youth can seem to emerge suddenly, but they usually develop over a period of time.

A mental health condition or disorder is a disability that interferes with thinking, feeling, relating, and functioning.

Most mental health disorders are biological and caused by imbalanced brain chemicals.

Youth may go undiagnosed until their symptoms worsen in adolescence or young adulthood.

Untreated needs may create a lifetime of inability to function in school, work, relationships, and society.

Mental health conditions or disorders can be recognized, diagnosed, and treated.

A mental health disorder is not a sign of weakness or lack of intelligence.





A mental health disorder can affect any person, regardless of age, parenting, and home environment.

Signs of a Potential Mental Health Condition

- Excessive fear and worry
- Confused thinking
- Extreme mood changes
- Avoiding social activities
- Lack of insight
- Substance abuse
- Changes in eating habits
- Intense sadness
- Concentration problems
- Prolonged or strong irritability or anger
- Difficulties relating to people
- Difficulty perceiving reality
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Suicidal thoughts

Behavioral Indicators of a Potential Mental Health Condition in Children

- Excessive anxiety or agitation
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent nightmares
- Hyperactive behavior
- Changes in school performance
- Withdrawal and isolation

RELATED LAWS AND LEGAL MATTERS

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Requires that children with a disability receive additional services to assist them in school.

Children with more intensive mental health needs may qualify for special education services

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Child must:

- Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- Have a record of such impairment
- Be regarded as having such an impairment

The school can make special accommodations for the child such as:

- Quiet space
- Home instruction
- Tape recorder or keyboard for taking notes

Community Mental Health Act

Establishes comprehensive community mental health centers throughout the country for the delivery of mental health services

Unmet emotional and mental health needs are helped with support and treatment, not punishment.

STORY OF HOPE AND RECOVERY

Dillan's Story

When Dillan entered high school his parents noticed a drastic change in his mood and behavior. Dillan had been somewhat anxious and withdrawn in middle school, but it did not appear to last for extended periods of time and cause problems at home or in school. Now everything seemed much more intense. Dillan was frequently anxious, easily agitated, and increasingly argumentative. Dillan generally had difficulty concentrating and remaining focused in school. For a period of time, he had a difficult time sleeping, but then began to withdraw and isolate, experiencing extremely low levels of energy. Dillan's parents took him for counseling which also led to a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation. Dillan was diagnosed with a mental health disorder and placed on a low dosage of medication. Dillan continued in counseling which together with the medication and his family's support stabilized his emotional distress. Dillan began to redevelop his ability to concentrate and function at home, in school, and in his community. Dillan continues to do well with the support of his family, school, peers, and psychological services.

EDUCATING INDIVIDUALS

Mental health problems do not only affect adults.

Children, teens, and young adults can face mental health challenges and conditions, too.

Mental health conditions occur when thoughts and feelings overwhelm or interfere with our ability to function.

Signs of Children's Mental Health Needs

- Fight often with family and friends
- Changes in your sleeping pattern
- Have low or no energy
- Feel numb or like nothing matters
- Feel edgy or angry
- Hear voices
- Feel like you can't control your emotions
- Don't want to do things you normally enjoy
- Can't perform daily tasks, like going to school and/or school work
- Don't want to hang out with your friends or family
- Can't stop thinking about certain things or memories
- Smoking, drinking, and/or using drugs
- Changes in your mood
- Changes in your eating habits
- Feel hopeless
- Feel confused or forgetful
- Feel upset, worried, or scared
- Want to harm yourself

If you suspect that you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health problem, be sure to seek help. It's ok.

Show compassion and care to your peers.

Protective Measures

Employing protective factors help promote mental health wellness.

These protective factors include:

- Obtain factual education about mental health
- Build and maintain motivation for a healthy lifestyle
- Associate with positive and kind individuals
- Participate in social and community activities of interest without substance use
- Learn to cope with peer pressure
- Do not be afraid to say "No"
- Be a positive role model
- Seek help if you are struggling with mental health problems

Most youth with mental health needs lead normal lives once symptoms are managed.

Effective treatment is available for children with mental health needs.

INFORMING FAMILIES

The positive influence of parents, family, and the home environment promotes an individual's well-being.

Families play an extremely critical role in promoting mental health.

Children with mental health conditions impact the well-being of parents and families.

Outward signs of mental health conditions in children are often behavioral.

It is important for families to understand the implications of mental health disorders.

Considerations Regarding a Potential Mental Health Condition in Children

- How long have the emotions and/or behaviors been occurring (days, weeks, months)?
- How frequent do the emotions and/or behaviors occur (several times a day, once a day, once a week)?
- How intense are the emotions and/or behaviors?
- Has there been a traumatic event in the child's life?
- Is there intense anxiety when separated from the caregiver?
- Is there decline in school performance?
- Is there severe worry, fear, or anxiety?
- Is there regular hyperactivity?
- Is there persistent disobedience or aggression?
- Is there withdrawal or isolation?
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities?
- Prolonged negative mood and/or depression?
- Substance use and/or abuse present?
- Threats of self-harm or harm to others present?
- Self-injury or self-destructive behavior present?

Therapy is a primary component of treating mental health issues in children.

Therapeutic interventions include counseling and medication treatment.

Family Guidance

Guidelines to help families include:

- Educate yourself and your family members about mental health conditions and recovery
- Maintain parental involvement and strong family bonds
- Communicate the importance of healthy attitudes and behaviors
- Encourage positive conversations and active listening
- Ask questions and engage in open regular communication
- Be observant of and monitor family member's condition, mood, and behaviors
- Get treatment support for a child with a mental health condition
- Seek caregiver support and respite as needed

TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS

Youth and young adults spend a considerable amount of time in school.

Educators and school administrators should be aware of mental health conditions in children.

Educators and school administrators can play a pivotal role in promoting emotional well-being.

Educators and school administrators can tailor services to promote success in children.

Signs of a Potential Mental Health Condition in Children

- Severe mood swings
- Drastic changes in behavior and/or personality
- Intense feelings of sorrow
- Withdrawn for extended periods of time
- Overwhelmed with fear, worry, and/or anxiety
- Hyperactivity and/or out-of-control behavior
- Disruptive and/or disobedient behavior
- Inability to concentrate and/or focus
- Lack of motivation and/or commitment to one's education
- Academic problems and/or poor performance

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educational institutions can employ the following strategies related to mental health in children:

- Stay aware of students, their emotional state, and behavioral patterns
- Provide training to faculty and staff in children's mental health
- Consider mental health needs when students display symptomology
- Ensure a positive, respectful, and safe school environment
- Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision making
- Engage and partner with parents as needed
- Access school-based mental health supports
- Collaborate with treatment and medical practitioners
- Get treatment support for child needing mental health care

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employees within the workplace may have caregiver responsibilities associated with a child's mental health condition.

Employees with caregiver responsibilities benefit from workplace flexibility and caregiver support initiatives.

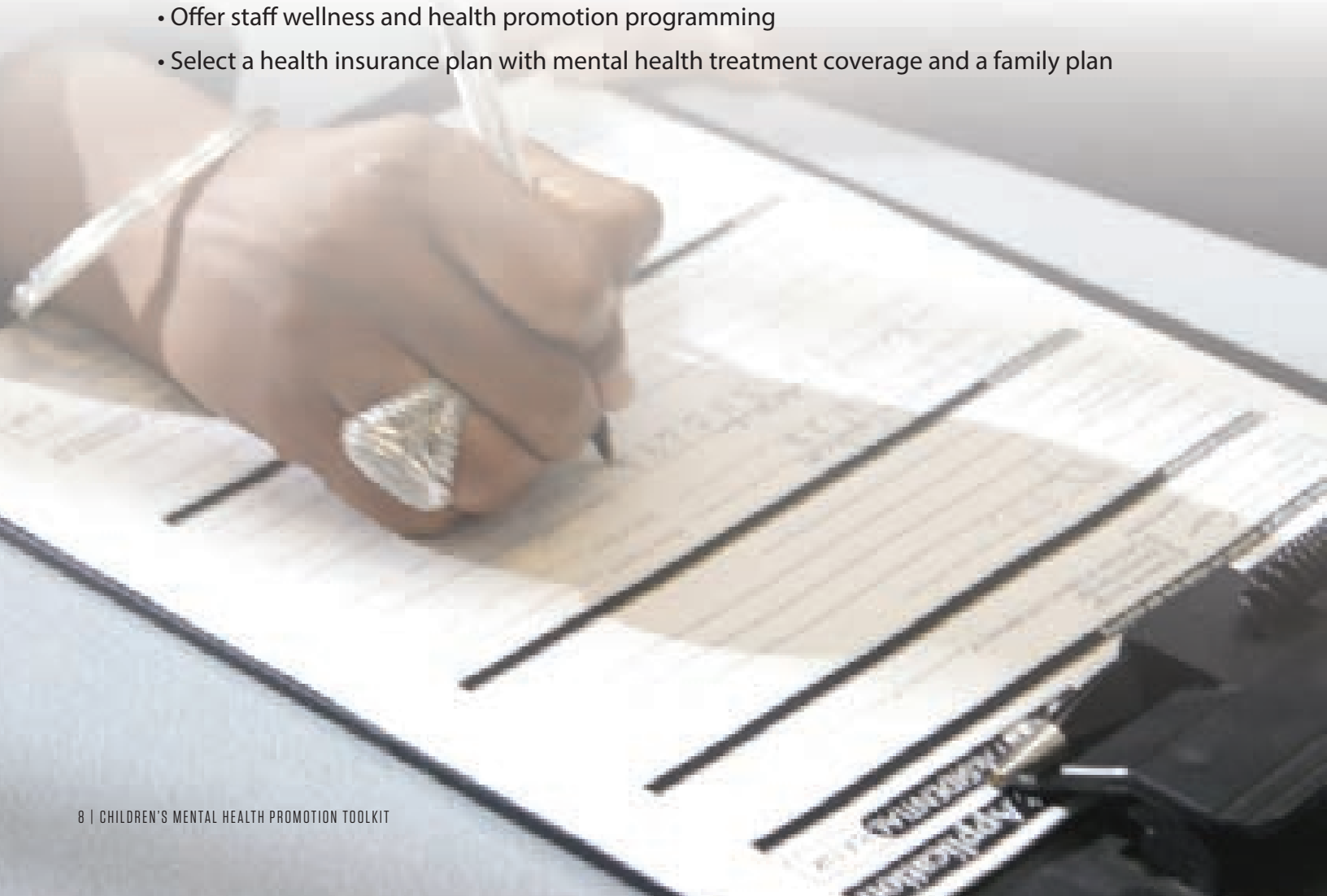
Children with emotional and/or behavioral health problems often require ongoing support from their caregiver.

A child's mental health problems can cause minor work interruptions to chronic medical conditions.

TOOLS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers can utilize the following strategies related to children's mental health caregiving responsibilities among their employees

- Offer flexible work scheduling
- Promote work-life balance initiatives
- Provide an employee assistance program
- Offer staff wellness and health promotion programming
- Select a health insurance plan with mental health treatment coverage and a family plan



INFORMING PRACTITIONERS

A number of health and human service practitioners play a vital role in the promotion and treatment of children's mental health.

These practitioners include:

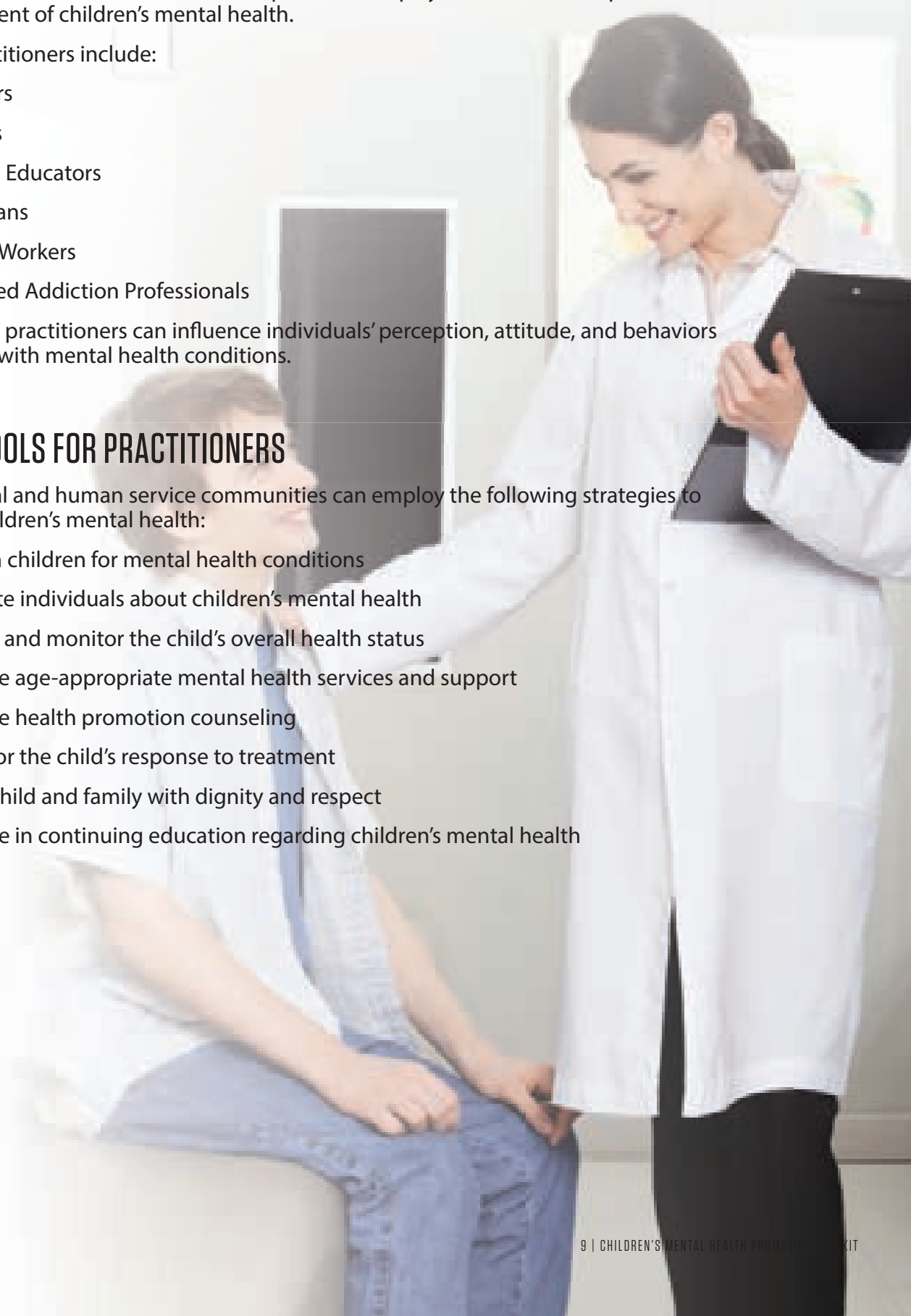
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Health Educators
- Clinicians
- Social Workers
- Certified Addiction Professionals

Health care practitioners can influence individuals' perception, attitude, and behaviors associated with mental health conditions.

TIPS & TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The medical and human service communities can employ the following strategies to address children's mental health:

- Screen children for mental health conditions
- Educate individuals about children's mental health
- Assess and monitor the child's overall health status
- Provide age-appropriate mental health services and support
- Provide health promotion counseling
- Monitor the child's response to treatment
- Treat child and family with dignity and respect
- Engage in continuing education regarding children's mental health



ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Advocacy is an important means of raising awareness about children's mental health issues.

Advocacy can assist with ensuring children's mental health is on the agenda.

Advocacy can lead to improvements in children's mental health policy, legislation, and services.

Equally important is decreasing any stigma associated with children's mental health and youth requiring mental health treatment.

Education, advocacy, and community action are essential for health promotion associated with children's mental health.

SOCIAL ACTION

The following strategies can be employed to address children's mental health:

- General factual community education and information dissemination regarding children's mental health
- Educator and health care practitioner training regarding children's mental health and destigmatization
- Insurance coverage and treatment access for youth with mental health conditions
- De-stigmatization of children requiring mental health treatment
- Empowerment of consumer, family, and peer-support organizations
- Media campaigns associated with children's mental health
- Legislation to promote prevention and expand access to mental health treatment
- Write legislators supporting these bills
- Write legislators about your child and/or family's experience with mental illness
- Get involved with your local National Alliance on Mental Illness Chapter

HEALTH PROMOTION PLAN

By completing this page, individuals can examine child health status and health promotion.

General Health Rating

Excellent Good Fair Poor

Do you

Often experience fear, worry, or anxiety? _____ YES _____ NO
Often get agitated and angry? _____ YES _____ NO
Have difficulty focusing and concentrating? _____ YES _____ NO
Withdraw from friends and family? _____ YES _____ NO
Frequently feel sad, down, or depressed? _____ YES _____ NO
Feel hopeless? _____ YES _____ NO
Have trouble completing the tasks you need to
get done at school, at home, or in the community? _____ YES _____ NO
Regularly use alcohol and/or drugs? _____ YES _____ NO

YES answers to any of these questions may indicate potential risk.

Health Risks (Factors that Negatively Impact Health): _____

Health Promotion (Factors that Positively Impact Health): _____

Health Goal(s): _____

Strategies to Accomplish Health Goals: _____

Success Influencers (Factors that Positively Impact Goal Attainment): _____

Where to go for help: _____

Other Important Factors: _____

NOTES

RESOURCES

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse

www.drugfreebroward.org

2-1-1 Broward 24 Hour Information and Referral Helpline

www.211-broward.org

Dial 2-1-1 or 954-537-0211

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness - Broward County

www.namibroward.org

Mental Health America

www.mentalhealthamerica.net

National Alliance on Mental Illness - Broward County

www.namibroward.org

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

SOURCES

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mental Health America



Ansin Building
1300 South Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316
954-462-4850
www.drugfreebroward.org