Mighty Writers Mental Health Resource Guide

Philadelphia

Mental Health is ... Mighty

It isn't easy being a kid, even under the best of circumstances. And the last couple of years — awash in uncertainty and confusion — were especially tough. Demand for mental health services for children is at an all-time high, and research shows that children of all ages have been impacted by the isolation and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing rates of anxiety and depression. Crisis visits by children to emergency rooms have risen sharply since the pandemic started.

In Philadelphia, pandemic stressors are compounded by local and neighborhood issues, like gun violence — another factor that causes a spike in visits to ERs. Children who directly witness neighborhood gun violence are negatively impacted, of course, but a recent study from CHOP shows that even the mental health of kids who live nearby is compromised. School shootings across the country exacerbate feelings of vulnerability and repetitive trauma — and there are not enough school counselors and psychologists to meet the growing demand.

Racism and racial inequity also have severe negative impacts on child and teen mental health, according to The American Academy of Pediatrics. "The evidence to support the continued negative impact of racism on health and well-being through implicit and explicit biases, institutional structures, and interpersonal relationships is clear," the AAP said in a recent policy statement. "Failure to address racism will continue to undermine health equity for all children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families."

Meanwhile, UNICEF reports that one in three internet users worldwide is a child, and while there's plenty of great information to be gleaned online, there are also many triggers that sabotage a child's self-esteem and feelings of security. For every terrific influencer who's making TikTok videos about mindfulness, there are several cruel commenters engaging in body shaming, hate speech or transphobic trolling.

The American Psychological Association puts it bluntly: "Children's mental health is in crisis," and we must find ways to provide healthy solutions and true comfort to those who suffer. As educators committed to amplifying and respecting children's voices, we at Mighty Writers want to be part of the solution.

That's why we've put this book of resources together. In this guide, you'll learn how to start to get your child mental health care; read about some of the mental health organizations that work directly with kids in Philadelphia; learn what to do when your kid is in crisis; get suggestions for outdoor activities to keep kids active and happy; and find online resources that'll educate you and your children.

As a literacy nonprofit, we do not employ mental health professionals, nor are we qualified to give out medical advice. And that's not what we're trying to do here. Rather, we're trying to provide a jumping-off point for thinking about this and getting kids help.

If you aren't familiar with us, and want to learn more about our free classes and resources for kids and families, turn to the last page in this booklet. Or just give us a shout: **hello@mightywriters.org**.

How Do I Get Help?

It is so hard to see the child you love struggling with anxiety, sadness or other emotional issues. And finding appropriate care by people you can trust can seem daunting. So here are some first steps from Public Citizens for Children & Youth.

If your child has Medical Assistance ...

Call a behavioral health agency to get an appointment.

• To find a behavioral health agency, contact Community Behavioral Health (CBH). CBH organizes behavioral health care for all Philadelphia residents with Medical Assistance. Call CBH at **215-413-3100** or search CBH's list of child behavioral health care providers at **cbhphilly.org/members/provider-directory**.

• If your child is school-age or in child care, call the school counselor or your child care provider and ask for help. Every Philadelphia public school, including charter schools, has a behavioral health agency providing care to students.

• Call your child's health care provider for advice and resources.

If your child has CHIP or private health insurance ...

• Call the 1-800 number on the back of your child's insurance card and ask for names of behavioral health agencies or go online to your health plan's provider directory to find behavioral health care.

If your child is uninsured ...

• Call PCCY's Helpline to find free or low-cost behavioral health care services and to get help applying for health insurance (MA or CHIP). PCCY Helpline services are free and available in any language. Call 215- 563-5848 x33.

*Not sure which applies to you? Reach out to PCCY by email at info@pccy.org or by phone at **215-563-5848.** Or go to **pccy.org** for more information.*

Behavioral Health Organizations in Philadelphia

There are many good organizations in Philadelphia committed to taking care of kids and addressing their emotional needs. The agencies on the following pages are all trusted providers or sources of information; if they're not right for your child or not in a location that's convenient to you, they will likely be able to point you in the right direction.

Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services

This is the municipal agency that runs and regulates services in Philadelphia for people with mental illness, addictions and/or intellectual disabilities. Their children and youth services include:

- **Early Intervention:** Support for Infants, Toddlers and Their Families – enhancing the development of infants and toddlers from birth to three years of age
- **Child/Adolescent Drug & Alcohol Case Management:** connecting children and their families to treatment programs and support services
- **Family-Based Mental Health Services:** in-home services for uninsured or underinsured children only
- **Student Assistance Program**: an early intervention program that can help identify and treat behavioral health issues that affect school success
- **WORD II Program:** for Juvenile Offender Substance Abuse Treatment
- **Prevention Services:** a comprehensive list of prevention programs for children ages K-12
- **Madeline Moore Summer Camp Grant:** up to $400 for families to send their child to summer camp
- **Re-engagement Centers:** helping high school students return to school and complete their education
- **Respite Services:** respite programs from an afternoon up to 48 hours

To get treatment assistance and support for your child, please contact:
dbhids.org or DBHIDS Main Line: 215-685-5400

Philadelphia has a comprehensive behavioral health system that was created through a unique partnership between DBHIDS (see prior page) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In 1997, Philadelphia launched its own behavioral health managed care organization, Community Behavioral Health (CBH). It is one of the few cities in the nation to do so.

CBH is a nonprofit contracted by the City of Philadelphia to manage the delivery of behavioral health services for Medicaid recipients of Philadelphia County. Services are delivered in accordance with Pennsylvania's HealthChoices Program, administrated through the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

CBH authorizes payment for a vast array of services for your child. The provider's responsibility is to deliver effective and medically necessary services in the least restrictive, most developmentally appropriate and culturally competent manner.

For more information about accessing services through CBH, call **215-413-3100 or cbhphilly.org**.

Children's Crisis Treatment Center (CCTC) is a nonprofit that specializes in addressing the impact of child abuse, neglect, traumatic events and other challenges to early childhood development, and to assisting children in reaching their full potential within their homes, community and society. CCTC's approach to care revolves around an understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Despite tremendous challenges, children can heal from psychological and emotional injuries. Through lasting partnerships with families, schools and communities, CCTC creates environments that foster resiliency and recovery.

Services include: therapeutic nursery, trauma assistance program and sexual trauma treatment, parent/caregiver workshops, case management, summer camp, school-based therapy and more.

For referral to one of the programs, call the CCTC referral line: **215.496.0584** or **cctckids.org**

The Attic Youth Center's mission is to create opportunities for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth to develop into healthy, independent, civic-minded adults within a safe and supportive community and to promote the acceptance of LGBTQ youth in society.

The Attic offers a wide range of programs and services designed to provide youth with the support and skills needed to transition into independent, thriving adults. The Attic strives to facilitate growth, empowerment and resiliency; and to help youth find their voice, which is often silenced.

For more information, go to **atticyouthcenter.org or call 215-545-4331.**

Bethanna provides an array of behavioral health services to children, youth and their families. Services are offered at their offices, in schools and in the community using evidence-based treatment modalities. They support children and youth who experience various forms of trauma, difficulty maintaining secure attachments with their primary caregivers, need specialized parenting skills support, and experience challenges across settings.

Services include:

- Comprehensive evaluations with a child psychiatrist or psychologist
- Individual and family therapy
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Ecosystem Family Therapy (ESFT)
- Parent-Child Interaction (PCIT)
- Art, play and other creative therapies
- Group therapy
- Medication evaluation and monitoring

For more information, call **800-394-6500** or **bethanna.org**.

PATH (People Acting To Help), Inc. is a comprehensive community behavioral health and intellectual disability center in Northeast Philadelphia with a mission of helping individuals achieve a more independent and fulfilling life. They can help families with:

- loss
- trauma
- depression
- behavioral problems
- poor school performance
- substance use
- serious and persistent mental illness

For more information, visit **pathcenter.org/INDEX.HTM or call 215-728-4565.**

COMHAR Latino Treatment Program

COMHAR is a nonprofit health and human services organization that provides a broad spectrum of integrated behavioral health, intellectual disabilities, HIV/AIDS and home health services to children, adults and the elderly. COMHAR's Latino Treatment Program is fully staffed with counselors and staff who come directly from the community, offering culturally relevant support services for both children and adults with a wide range of needs. Services include:

- Family outpatient evaluation and counseling
- HOPE Latino Community Integrated Recovery Center (CIRC)
- Latino Art & Recovery Program

For more information, go to **comhar.org/latino-treatment-program, or call 215-496-0707.**

What If My Child Is in Crisis?

It's not always easy to understand what constitutes a crisis for your child, or what to do. Here is some helpful information from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

What Is a Crisis?

A mental health crisis is when your child is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if their emotions and behavior seem extreme and out of control. Warning signs may include:

- Expressing suicidal thoughts, either through explicit statements such as "I want to die" or more vague statements such as "I don't want to be here anymore"
- Making threats to harm others or themselves
- Engaging in self-injurious behavior, such as cutting or burning
- Expressing severe agitation and aggression, including physical aggression, destruction of property, hostility, etc.
- Experiencing hallucinations or delusions
- Isolating themselves from friends and family

How to Take Action

Once you suspect that your child is in crisis, you will have some decisions to make. How you proceed depends on whether they are in immediate danger and the resources available in your community.

Immediate Danger

If you feel that your child's life or someone else's life is in danger, call a local crisis line or go to a local crisis treatment center (information on next page). Under no circumstances should you leave the child alone. If you call 911, let 911 operators know that it is your *child* experiencing a mental health crisis and request a trained crisis intervention team member.

No Immediate Danger

If you are confident that your child is not at immediate risk, and that you can manage the situation, it is still an urgent situation that should be addressed as quickly as possible.

- Create a safe space for them to talk about their feelings and actively listen. It's ok to ask questions, but most importantly, reassure them that you are here to support and help them.
- If your child is already receiving treatment, get in touch with their psychiatrist or therapist.
- Connect with a hotline or text line (see next page).

Crisis Resources

The following options are available to help a child and family access the support they need during a behavioral health crisis:

Is the child already connected to behavioral health services?	Does the child require an urgent, same-day behavioral health evaluation?	Does the family require assistance or guidance regarding a child's behaviors or emotions?	Is the child experiencing emotions or behaviors that may cause a life-threatening injury to him/herself or others?
Contact the behavioral health provider. If additional assistance is needed, please contact **Community Behavioral Health Member Services** at (888) 545-2600 24 hours/7 days per week	**People Acting To Help (PATH) Urgent Care Center** 8220 Castor Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19152 (215) 728-4651 **Hours of Operation:** Monday – Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. **Closed on Holidays** Accessible to public transit, and on-site parking is available	**Call Philadelphia Crisis Line** (215) 685-6440 24 hours/7 days per week • Telephonic Support • Request Children's Mobile Crisis Team • Guidance regarding 302 petitions	**Philadelphia Children's Crisis Response Center** 3300 Henry Avenue Falls Two Building, 3rd Floor Philadelphia, PA 19129 (215) 878- 2600 **Hours of Operation:** 24 hours/7 days per week Accessible to public transit, and on-site parking is available

National Resources

• **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255), trained crisis counselors available 24/7

• **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 to reach a crisis counselor 24/7

• **SAMHSA treatment helpline:** 800-662-HELP, trained crisis counselors available 24/7

• **NAMI Basics OnDemand:** free, six-session online education program for parents, caregivers and other family who provide care for youth who are experiencing mental health symptoms. NAMI Helpline: 800-950-NAMI, M-F, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. ET

• **Trans Lifeline:** Peer support and crisis hotline for trans people in English and Spanish, run by and for trans people.

Online Mental Health Resources

There are many mental health resources online, but it can be hard to tell what's reliable and what's misinformation. The resources listed here are sites we trust.

The Mental Health Coalition (@mentalhealthcoalition)
Offering mental health support (crisis line included) and coming together to de-stigmatize mental health.

Youth Mental Health Project (@ymhproject) (Parent Support Network)
Grassroots nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate, empower, and support families and communities to better understand and care for the mental health of our youth. Their programming includes the Parent Support Network, which helps parents support each other in supporting their children's mental health journeys.

Child Mind Institute (@childmindinstitute)
Independent nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children & families struggling with mental health & learning disorders. Their website is bilingual, and they offer resources for helping children cope with anxiety around school shootings as well as the war in Ukraine.

The Trevor Project (@trevorproject)
The world's largest suicide prevention and mental health organization for LGBTQ youth connecting those in need to trained counsellors and providing mental health resources for LGBTQ youth.

The Jed Foundation (@jedfoundation)
Nonprofit dedicated to teen and young adult mental health support and suicide prevention by equipping individuals with life skills, strengthening schools with support network, and mobilizing community to create a culture of caring and understanding.

OC87 Recovery Diaries
Interactive website featuring stories of mental health, empowerment and change, created by and for those whose journeys of recovery speak to audiences from all walks of life.

Active Minds (@active_minds)
Nonprofit dedicated to mental health awareness and education to change the conversation about mental health.

Kate Allan (@thelatestkate)
Mental Health author and illustrating making inspiring drawings to impart professional advice and encouragement. Her cute animal drawings teach readers to love their bodies, promote self-love and self-care, and battle depression and anxiety.
Social Media: Instagram

We the Urban (@wetheurban)
A Black-owned online publication dedicated to celebrating inclusivity, self-love, and marginalized voices. Besides daily news, art, and culture, you can find mental health reminders and affirmations on their various platforms.
Social Media: website, Instagram

How Mental (@howmental)
A community of people and organizations on a mission to make wellbeing a global priority.
Social Media: website, Instagram

Sports and Outdoor Organizations

Studies show that access to nature and physical activity provide enormous benefits for kids' mental health, including reducing stress, improving sleep and increasing overall satisfaction. Here is a list of organizations and locations we know provide good opportunities for kids.

Anderson Monarchs

Grades K-12. Soccer, basketball and baseball
andersonmonarchs.org
info@andersonmonarchs.org

Bicycle Coalition

Age 12-18. Youth cycling programs across Philadelphia
bicyclecoalition.org

GALAEI

Free monthly community yoga for QTBIPOC in the West Kensington/ North Philly/Norris Square Park area
galaeiqtbipoc.org/our-impact/community-wellness
215-398-5003 or info@galaei.org

Girls on the Run

Running and Mentorship Program for youth girls
girlsontherun.org
215-247-8598

Police Athletic League

Summer camp, culture day and healthy activities
phillypal.org
215-291-9000

Philly Youth Basketball

Basketball, leadership, and mentorship

phillyyouthbasketball.org

267-519-9209

Students Run Philly Style

Running and mentorship program for youth

studentsrunphilly.org

267-930-3546

Yeah Philly

Service, building community and safe space for casual hangouts

yeahphilly.org

267-892-3538

Zhang Sah Martial Arts

Grades K-8, martial arts and day camps

zhangsah.org

215-923-6676

Smith Playground

Unstructured creative play for children 10 and younger

smithplayground.org

215-765-4325

Shofuso Japanese Gardens

Japanese gardens with programming about Japanese culture

japanphilly.org/shofuso

215-878-5097 or info@japanphilly.org

Wissahickon Environmental Center Tree House

Environmental education for adults, children, and families

wectreehouse.wixsite.com/findyourpath/aboutwec

215-685-9285 or wec@phila.gov

Wissahickon Trails

Walks and nature programs for youth and adults

wissahickontrails.org/who-we-are/about-us

215-646-8866

Bartram's Garden

Basketball and leadership for youth

bartramsgarden.org/youth-programs

215-729-5281

Discovery Center

Outdoor activities, leadership programs for youth

discoveryphila.org

610-990-3431

FDR Park

Help design and build a new play space for the FDR Park Clubhouse Lawn

fdrparkphilly.org

215-683-3600

John Heinz Natural Wildlife Center

Variety of walks and nature programs suitable for the whole family year-round

fws.gov/refuge/john-heinz-tinicum

215-365-3118 or johnheinznwr@fws.gov

Pennypack Environmental Center

Nature, outdoor and recreation activities

pennypacktrust.org

215-685-0470 or pec@phila.gov

About Mighty Writers

Mighty Writers (MW) teaches kids 3-17 to think clearly and write with clarity so they can achieve success at school, at work and in life. We do this through free programming in West Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, North Philadelphia and Germantown; in Camden, Atlantic City, Newark and Trenton, NJ; in Chester County, PA; and in New York City, NY.

We focus on amplifying and empowering the voices of our students while providing high-quality, community-oriented writing programs. As a result, grades improve, self-esteem soars and futures come into view.

Literacy is poverty's Kryptonite. We aim to improve academic performance and social-emotional skills in the short term and alleviate poverty in the long term. Through our core values of resilience, respect and optimism, our young people develop their superpower: the power of the pen. Ultimately, we want all Mighty students to be advanced thinkers and clear writers — college graduates who continue to reflect our Mighty values of kindness and integrity.

Our approach is focused on the whole child. That's why, when the pandemic hit, we began to provide food and essential resources at many of our sites. Now, in addition to our after-school, out-of-school and summer writing programs, we offer daily distribution of diapers, period products, books, clothing, school supplies and groceries — all given away for free.

It was through this robust programming that the Mighty Team noticed the great need for mental health resources for Philadelphia children families.

For more information about our mental health initiative, or Mighty Writers in general, please visit **mightywriters.org** or find us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter.

MIGHTY WRITERS