



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

2026 MAY CCSS: Operation Ready Families: Strong Families, Strong Force

2026 MAY CCSS S01: Mental Health Strategies for Pediatric Providers Working with Military Children and Youth

Resource List

[Your Adolescent: Anxiety and Avoidant Disorders](#) (2026) discusses anxiety and avoidant disorders in adolescents, emphasizing their prevalence, impact, and available treatments. Anxiety disorders are common in adolescents, with approximately 31.9% experiencing one at some point during their teenage years. Avoidant disorders involve avoiding situations or stimuli due to fear or discomfort and can manifest as specific phobias or agoraphobia. These conditions can significantly affect academic performance, social relationships, and overall quality of life, leading to low self-esteem and reduced confidence. Common signs of anxiety disorders in adolescents include excessive worry or fear, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches, and social withdrawal. Avoidant behaviors often involve avoiding social situations, refusing to participate in activities, and reluctance to try new things. It is important to distinguish persistent behaviors that significantly impact daily life from normal adolescent discomfort.

[About Children's Mental Health](#) (2024) describes mental health as the achievement of developmental and emotional milestones, the acquisition of healthy social skills, and the development of effective coping mechanisms. A child's mental well-being is influenced by a combination of individual, family, and community factors, both supportive and detrimental. While many children show positive indicators of mental health, common conditions such as anxiety, depression, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affect nearly one in five children in the U.S., significantly impacting their ability to function. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advocates for a public health approach that prioritizes prevention by improving the conditions in which children live, learn, and play to foster positive mental health from an early age.

Pediatric mental health is a critical public health concern, particularly within the military health system (MHS), where military-connected children (MCC) face unique and compounding stressors. [Deploying Solutions: Tackling Barriers to Pediatric Mental Health Care for Military-Connected Children in Primary Care](#) (2026), examines the unique challenges MCC face in accessing pediatric mental health care. National survey data highlight disparities in access, especially among children of active-duty service members, and underscores the need for improved identification, provider training, and integration of behavioral health into primary care. The review calls for both military and civilian systems to expand access, reduce stigma, and strengthen provider readiness to manage common mental health concerns in primary care settings, ultimately supporting the well-being and resilience of military families.

[Children and Mental Health: Is this Just a Stage](#) (2024), provides a comprehensive overview of mental health in children and adolescents. Mental health is a critical component of a child's overall well-being. Many mental disorders in adults have their roots in childhood, with symptoms that often go unrecognized. Early intervention is key, as it can prevent more severe and lasting problems as a child grows. It can be challenging to differentiate between typical childhood behaviors and a mental health condition. If you have concerns about a child's mental health, it is recommended to speak with their doctor, school counselor, or another healthcare provider. Distinguishing between challenging behaviors and emotions that are a part of normal development and those that may be a cause for concern can be hard. Consider seeking help if a child's behavior or emotions last for weeks or longer, cause distress for the child and/or family, or interfere with functioning at school, home, or with friends.



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References

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2024). *About Children’s Mental Health*. CDC.gov.

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Johnson, H. L., Ling, P. J., 3rd, & Ling, C. G. (2026). Deploying Solutions: Tackling Barriers to Pediatric Mental Health Care for Military-Connected Children in Primary Care. *The Nursing Clinics of North America*, 61(1), 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cnur.2025.09.014>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (2024). *Children and Mental Health: Is This Just a Stage?*

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