Introduction
Welcome to the first edition of the Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) Mental Health Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues that affect our students. The intent is to create a newsletter twice a year, focusing on a different mental health topic. This issue’s focus will address the topic of depression.

However, before discussing specific mental health topics, it is important to discuss the topic of “mental health” in general.

“Mental Health” vs. “Mental Illness”: What’s the difference?
According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Mood Disorders Society of Canada (2009):

**Mental Health** is an ideal we all strive for. It means striking a balance in all aspects of one’s life; mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Caring relationships, a place to call home, a supportive community, and work and leisure all contribute to mental health. Everyone’s personal balance is unique and the challenge is to stay mentally healthy by keeping the right balance. However, no one’s life is perfect, so mental health is all about learning the coping skills to deal with life’s ups and downs the best we can.

**Mental Illness** is a health condition characterized by serious disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that are severe enough to affect day-to-day functioning. It is the term used to refer to a variety of mental disorders that can be diagnosed by a medical professional. Some names for mental illness include schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, eating disorder, and borderline personality disorder.
What is meant by ‘child and adolescent mental health’?

- The term “child and adolescent mental health” refers to the social, emotional, and behavioural well-being of children and adolescents, and is considered an integral part of healthy development.
- Just as with physical health, no one goes through life without some mental health problems. This is as true in childhood and adolescence as it is in adulthood.
- Many such problems are a normal part of life. For the most part, we learn and grow from them.
- For children and adolescents, however, adult awareness, sensitivity, and guidance often are very important to enable children and adolescents to learn and grow from such problems.
- For some children and adolescents, the problems are serious enough that supports and guidance from the main adults in their lives (e.g., parents and teachers) are not sufficient, and specialized assistance is needed. Without such assistance, the problems can cause much stress and heartache to the children and adolescents, as well as to their families, their teachers, and the community. In addition, such problems can lead to even more serious mental health problems in adulthood.

Teacher’s Role

- The daily actions of effective teachers and their positive relationships with their students actively promote the mental health of students.
- Teachers’ roles and relationships reach through and beyond the substance of the curriculum to impact students’ feelings of self-worth, dignity, identity, and belonging. Through interactions with both students and their parents, teachers are in a unique position to strengthen these important elements of mental health.
- Teachers also are in an excellent position to observe mood changes or behaviours that seem excessive or unusual, perhaps lasting longer than average, which could indicate a mental health problem requiring consultation and intervention.
- “Sometimes you just can tell that something is not right.”

Facts:

How Does Depression Impact Youth?

- It is estimated that 10-20% of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder—the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide.
- Today, approximately 5% of male youth and 12% of female youth, age 12 to 19, have experienced a major depressive episode.
- The total number of 12-19 year olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million.
- Once depression is recognized, help can make a difference for 80% of people who are affected, allowing them to get back to their regular activities.
- Mental illness is increasingly threatening the lives of our children; with Canada’s youth suicide rate being the third highest in the industrialized world.
- Suicide is among the leading causes of death in 15-24 year old Canadians, second only to accidents; 4,000 people die prematurely each year by suicide.
- Schizophrenia is youth’s greatest disabler as it strikes most often in the 16 to 30 year age group, affecting an estimated one person in 100.
- Surpassed only by injuries, mental disorders in youth are ranked as the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada.
- In Canada, only 1 out of 5 children who need mental health services receive them.

What is Depression?

We have all said at one time or another, “I’m so depressed” or “I’m so sad” when we are feeling down. It is not uncommon to feel “blue” or to feel sad from time to time.

According to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, depression is intense feelings of sadness and worthlessness that are so bad that you have lost interest in life. True depression is an overwhelming despair so bleak that people who have experienced it say that it is the worst pain ever endured.

There are many types of depression and any type of depression needs to be taken seriously. Types of depression include: Major Depressive Disorder (or Clinical Depression), Dysthmic Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Postpartum Depression, and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

For further information on these types of depression, please go to the following website: www.mooddisorderscanada.ca
Help students recognize and acknowledge positive contributions and performance (provide opportunities for success).

- Depressed students may see issues in black and white terms—all bad or all good. It may help to keep a record of their achievements that you can show to them occasionally.

- Encourage gradual social interaction (i.e., small group work).

- Encourage the student to help develop interventions (this will lead to more successful strategies and will foster the student’s ability to problem-solve).

- Seek help from support personnel. Consult your school counselors to get suggestions of what to do for specific students. They may also suggest discussing your concerns with the student’s parent(s).

- Each case is different and requires individual planning.

Nothing is impossible, the word itself says "I’m Possible!"
RESOURCES

LOCAL RESOURCES

Canadian Mental Health Association – Saskatoon Branch
The Canadian Mental Health Association promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

Catholic Family Services
306-244-8537: 200 506 25th Street East.
Catholic Family Services (CFS) delivers support to the Saskatoon community by providing relevant and meaningful programs and services to individuals, couples and families.

Mental Health & Addiction Services: Child and Youth Programs
306-655-7560: 715 Queen Street
The purpose of the Child and Youth Program is to meet the mental health and addiction needs of children and youth, and support healthy development in all spheres of daily life.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Canadian Mental Health Association
The Canadian Mental Health Association promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. The CMHA accomplishes this mission through advocacy, education, research and service.

www.cmha.ca

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC)
MDSC is a national, not for profit, consumer driven, voluntary health charity committed to ensuring that the voices of consumers, family members and caregivers are heard on issues relating to mental health and mental illness; and in particular with regard to depression, bipolar illness and other associated mood disorders.

http://www.mooddisorderscanada.ca/

Healthy Minds Canada
This national charity funds mental health research and helps improve service and support systems for the millions of Canadians affected by mental health problems by educating families, teachers and service providers about mental health research outcomes and best practices.

http://healthymindscanada.ca/

Kids Help Phone
Kids Help Phone is Canada’s leading youth counselling service, moving kids from distress and isolation to confidence and competence. Available anytime of the day or night, in English and French, by phone and by web. It is the go-to resource for kids in Canada aged five to 20, when they need help or trustworthy information on issues that are difficult to discuss with anyone else.
Contact 1-800-668-6868 or www.kidshelpphone.ca

ABCs of Mental Health
The ABCs of Mental Health provides two free, web-based Resources - one for teachers and one for parents—to help answer these questions. The Resources include ideas for promoting the mental health of children and adolescents, information about how children change as they get older, descriptions of behaviours that might indicate a problem, and practical suggestions for steps to take.

http://www.hincksdellcrest.org/ABC/Welcome.aspx

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is Canada’s largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world’s leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health.

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/Pages/home.aspx

INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
Information on child and adolescent psychiatry including fact sheets for parents and caregivers, current research, practice guidelines and managed care.

http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Home.aspx

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
DBSA provides hope, help, support, and education to improve the lives of people who have mood disorders.

http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home

International Society for Bipolar Disorder (ISBD)
Aims to become a forum to foster ongoing international collaboration on education and research to advance the treatment of all aspects of bipolar disorders.

http://www.isbd.org/

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
NASP maintains a website with a large number of resources, including handouts, articles, and other information freely available to the public.

http://www.nasponline.org/index.aspx

BOOKS & ARTICLES

British Columbia Ministry of Education.
“Teaching Students with Mental Health Disorders Resources for Teachers: Volume 2 Depression.”
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialeld/docs/depression_resource.pdf


Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.


National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

The only reason I’ve shared my story is to take that tiny baby step of breaking down the stigma attached to depression.

- CLARA HUGHES

My past has not defined me, destroyed me, deterred me, or defeated me; it has only strengthened me.

- STEVE MARABOLI
Famous Faces of Depression:

- Buzz Aldrin, American astronaut, the second man to set foot on the moon
- Woody Allen, American film director and comedian
- Alec Baldwin, American actor
- Christian Bale, British actor
- Amanda Beard, American Swimmer and Olympic Gold Medalist
- Halle Berry, American actress
- Jon Bon Jovi, American rock singer and songwriter
- Terry Bradshaw, American football player, Football Analyst, Sports Anchor
- Drew Carey, American comedian and actor
- Jim Carrey, Canadian actor and comedian
- Agatha Christie, English crime writer
- Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister
- Leonard Cohen, Canadian singer-songwriter
- Courteney Cox, American actress
- Sheryl Crow, American singer-songwriter
- Ellen DeGeneres, American comedian and talk show host
- Diana, Princess of Wales
- Bob Dylan, American singer-songwriter, poet and artist
- Anne Hathaway, American actress
- Ernest Hemingway, American writer
- Abe Lincoln, American lawyer and politician, 16th President of the United States
- Alanis Morissette, Canadian musician and songwriter
- Isaac Newton, British physicist
- Conan O’Brien, American television host, comedian, writer, producer and performer
- Gwyneth Paltrow, American actress
- Dolly Parton, American country singer and actress
- Edgar Allan Poe, American poet and writer
- J. K. Rowling, British writer (Harry Potter series)
- Terry Sawchuk, Canadian goaltender
- Brooke Shields, American actress
- Britney Spears, American pop singer
- Leo Tolstoy, Russian writer
- Mark Twain, American Writer
- Owen Wilson, American comedian and actor
- Mike Wallace, American Journalist on 60 Minutes
- Robin Williams, American comedian and actor

These websites and resources are for information only and the user is responsible for evaluating the content and appropriate uses of the information.