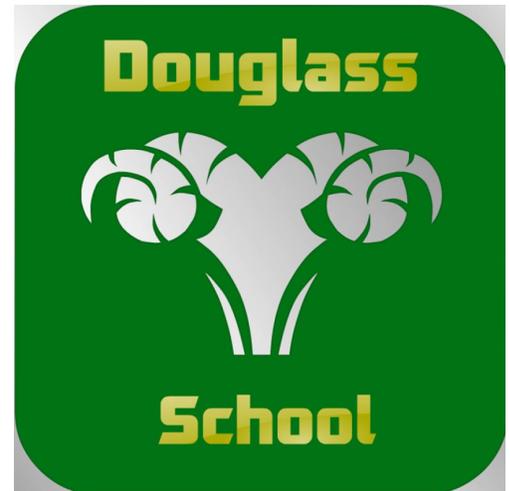


Douglass Unified Mental Health Team **NEWSLETTER**

Quarter 4
2019-2020



An Introduction:

The purpose of the Unified Mental Health Team (UMHT) at Douglass is to promote and support the mental and behavioral health of all of our students.

Members of the Unified Mental Health Team meet at least monthly to discuss systemic issues pertaining to the delivery and evaluation of mental health prevention and intervention supports across the school. The Douglass UMHT works together to identify areas of need in our school and develop efforts to prevent any future social, emotional, and behavioral health concerns for our students.

Meet Our Team Members:

Stacie Ahrens-Mininberg, Principal
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Celia Benz, Counselor (students M-Z)
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Alcohol Awareness Month

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Underage drinking is a serious public health problem in the United States. Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among America's youth, and drinking by young people poses enormous health and safety risks.

The consequences of underage drinking can affect everyone—regardless of age or drinking status. We all feel the effects of the aggressive behavior, property damage, injuries, violence, and deaths that can result from underage drinking. This is not simply a problem for some families—it is a nationwide concern.

Underage drinking poses a range of risks and negative consequences. It is dangerous because it:

Causes many deaths

Based on data from 2006–2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that, on average, alcohol is a factor in the deaths of 4,358 young people under age 21 each year. This includes:

- 1,580 deaths from motor vehicle crashes
- 1,269 from homicides
- 245 from alcohol poisoning, falls, burns, and drowning
- 492 from suicides

Causes many injuries

- Drinking alcohol can cause kids to have accidents and get hurt. In 2011 alone, about 188,000 people under age 21 visited an emergency room for alcohol-related injuries.⁵
- Impairs judgment
- Drinking can lead to poor decisions about engaging in risky behavior, including drinking and driving, sexual activity (such as unprotected sex), and aggressive or violent behavior.

Increases the risk of physical and sexual assault

- Underage youth who drink are more likely to carry out or be the victim of a physical or sexual assault after drinking than others their age who do not drink.

Can lead to other problems

- Drinking may cause youth to have trouble in school or with the law. Drinking alcohol also is associated with the use of other drugs.
- Increases the risk of alcohol problems later in life
- Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are 4 times more likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.

Interferes with brain development

- Research shows that young people's brains keep developing well into their 20s. Alcohol can alter this development, potentially affecting both brain structure and function. This may cause cognitive or learning problems and/or make the brain more prone to alcohol dependence. This is especially a risk when people start drinking young and drink heavily.

Resources:

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health>

<https://www.alcohol.org/awareness-month/>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Mental Health Month

May is mental health month. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Friends and loved ones can make a big difference. Only 44% of adults with diagnosable mental health problems and less than 20% of children and adolescents receive needed treatment. Friends and family can be important influences to help someone get the treatment and services they need by:

- Reaching out and letting them know you are available to help
- Helping them access mental health services
- Learning and sharing the facts about mental health, especially if you hear something that isn't true
- Treating them with respect, just as you would anyone else
- Refusing to define them by their diagnosis or using labels such as "crazy"

People often don't get the mental health services they need because they don't know where to start. Talk to your primary care doctor or another health professional about mental health problems. Ask them to connect you with the right mental health services. If you do not have a health professional who is able to assist you, use these resources to find help for yourself, your friends, your family, or your students.

If the situation is potentially life-threatening, get immediate emergency assistance by calling 911, available 24 hours a day.

Resources:

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/>

<https://www.nami.org/>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Community Mental Health Resources:

- Loudoun County Mental Health: 703-771-5100
- Loudoun County Emergency Mental Health Services: 703-777-0320 Available 24/7
- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 or text "CONNECT" to 85511
- School Based Mental Health Services and Community Partners: [Brochure found here](#)

Depression and Suicide Prevention Resources

In an emergency, call 911 and ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) deputy or officer.

- [Loudoun County Mental Health Emergency Services. Phone: 703-777-0320 \(24 hour-a-day, 7 days a week\)](#)
- [Loudoun County Crisis Intervention Team Assessment Center](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- [How To Safeguard Your Home](#)
- [What Every Parent Should Know About Preventing Youth Suicide](#)
- [Youth Suicide Warning Signs](#)

LCPS Department of Pupil Services Mental Health & Wellness

Parent Seminar Series:

All presentations will be offered at the LCPS Administrative Building, 2100 Education Court, Ashburn, VA 20148.

- March 19th, 6:30pm - 8:30pm: **A Time to Connect in a Busy World**
- April 16th, 6:30pm - 8:30pm: **Three Things To Help Students Deal With Stress And Anxiety**
- April 14th, 6:30pm - 8:30pm: **Preventing Perfectionism: What Parents Can Do With Young Children**

For more information or to register, go to lcps.org/ParentResourceServices or call 571-252-6540

Prevention Alliance of Loudoun Parent Seminar Series:

Free educational workshops for parents, educators, and community members.

- March 12th, 6:30pm - 8:30pm: **Beyond Academics: A Conversation for Parents and Teens About Substance Use.** Location: Cascades Library.

For more information, please contact: Judith Romberg (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Developmental Services) at 703-777-0176 or Jennifer Wall (Loudoun County Public Schools) at 571-252-1885.