

# A MESSAGE FROM MHA

As students head back to school, they can be dealing with a host of emotions. Young people today deal with a lot – and those who are struggling with mental health problems often must deal with them on their own – because we don't recognize the seriousness of the problems until kids begin to get in trouble at school. That's too late, and it often doesn't result in the right kind of help.

MHA wants to remind students and parents that mental health issues are common and treatable and should be addressed as soon as possible - before Stage 4. Mental health problems are best dealt with through health, educational, and social services and supports.

This year, MHA has developed tools and resources for young people to help them understand the effects trauma can have on the mind and how traumatic events may trigger the onset of mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and psychosis.

The toolkit is designed for MHA affiliates, advocates, and organizations of all types to use with youth and school personnel to raise awareness of the importance of proactively addressing early warning signs of mental health conditions in hopes of encouraging young people to seek help and support as soon as possible so that they can address issues Before Stage 4.

While we can't completely shield young people from all the stressful or traumatic situations they may be facing, we can help them learn to recognize when they may need help. And we can help the adults with whom they interact do the same.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Gionfriddo".

Paul Gionfriddo  
President & CEO  
Mental Health America

# INTRODUCTION

The 2018 Back to School Toolkit is designed for MHA Affiliates, advocates, and organizations of all types to use with parents, youth and school personnel to raise awareness of the importance of mental health issues that start during the youth.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Be aware of the relationship between trauma and mental health problems in youth;
- Learn strategies for recognizing the early warning signs of common mental health conditions; and
- Access resources for finding treatment and help in times of crisis.

This year's toolkit includes:

## Media Materials

- Key Messages and Stats
- Drop-In Article

## Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Social Media Posts
- Social Media Images

## Handouts/Poster

- Fact Sheet: Understanding Trauma
- Fact Sheet: Recognizing Depression
- Fact Sheet: Recognizing Anxiety
- Fact Sheet: Recognizing Psychosis
- Fact Sheet: Preventing Suicide
- Worksheet: Keep Your Mind Grounded
- Poster: Don't Suffer in Silence

In addition to the materials included in this toolkit, MHA has created a wealth of web content for young people and adults that can easily be linked to and shared in electronic newsletters and over social media.

## *Questions?*

If you have further questions about Back to School, please contact Danielle Fritze, Senior Director of Public Education and Visual Communication at [dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net).