



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mayor Jacobs Focuses on Children in Second Week of Monthlong Mental Health Programming

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knox County continues to recognize national Mental Health Awareness Month, focusing this week on children.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, created National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day to shine a spotlight on the importance of children’s mental health and how positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development.

The county observed Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day on Saturday, May 9 with Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs issuing a proclamation.

“Mental illness in children is something a lot of people don’t like to talk about, but SAMHSA created an awareness day for a reason,” Mayor Jacobs said. “We need to increase public awareness about the needs of children with serious mental illness and severe emotional disturbance, and encourage those who need help to seek treatment.”

Mental disorders among children are described as serious changes in the way children learn, behave or handle their emotions, causing distress and problems getting through the day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Sadly, the US Surgeon General estimates that despite the presence of well-established diagnostic criteria, most children with mental disorders do not receive treatment—even with well-recognized conditions such as anxiety, behavior disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

According to data collected by the National Survey for Children’s Health, boys are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than girls and more than 9 percent of children in the U.S. are diagnosed with the disorder including:

- 388,000 children aged 2-5 years
- 4 million children aged 6-11 years
- 3 million children aged 12-17 years

The CDC notes that some mental health issues can present in different ways for different children—anxiety and depression can show up as irritability, anger or behavioral problems, for example—and, out of shame, some children keep their worries and struggles to themselves, so it can be easy to miss symptoms of a larger issue or attribute them incorrectly.

“Mental health is not something to ignore and no one, at any age, should feel shame addressing any issue they have,” said Mayor Jacobs. “Knowing warning signs can help you decide if speaking to a professional is the right next step for your child.”

While each mental health illness or disorder has its own symptoms, common signs of mental illness can include hopelessness; extended or increased periods of irritability; feeling disinterested and not being able to do things they used to enjoy; showing changes in eating or sleeping patterns; having a hard time paying attention; feeling worthless, useless or guilty; or showing signs self-injury and self-destructive behavior.

“Mental health is important to overall health and early identification of an issue is key,” said Mayor Jacobs. “It’s important that children see it’s ok to ask for help or talk about their feelings with a trusted friend or adult. Only by working together can we create a community in which every child can thrive.”

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