

### **MAY: Children's Mental Health Awareness Month**

May has been deemed Children's Mental Health Awareness Month by the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Division of Adolescent and School Health.

"The number of adolescents reporting poor mental health is increasing. Building strong bonds and connecting to youth can protect their mental health. Schools and parents can create these protective relationships with students and help them grow into healthy adulthood." (youth.gov, 2021)

This past year with the struggles of coping with the stressors of the pandemic and adjusting to new norms, shifts between in school learning and virtual learning, has caused increased stress not only on adults but also on our youth. According to recent statistics, more than two thirds of parents who sought help since the start of the pandemic said they had witnessed a decline in their child's emotional well-being, (72%), behavior (68%), and physical health due to decreased activities/exercise (68%).

Below are the most common mental health related challenges parents have sought help for:

Anxiety (40%)

Depression (37%)

Seeking help for problem behavior (30%),

ADHD (30%)

Other learning challenges (23%)

(*Child Mind Institute Children's Mental Health Report 2020*)

I encourage you to visit

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

This resource provides a "Family Tool Kit" under resources and downloads, it also provides age-appropriate activities from elementary to middle school to complete with your children to promote their mental health and well-being. The website gives guidance on where to start and who to call in addressing any mental health related concerns you may have. Just as we would treat and address a physical injury or broken bone with rushing our kids to the doctor or emergency room for physical injury, we also need to care for their mental health in this manner as well. Reach out, ask questions, and utilize resources to help us keep our students healthy both physically and mentally. If you have questions, or need assistance on guidance or resources, please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance. I am happy to help guide you and your student to resources in our community.



### COVID and Allergies

Is it COVID or is it allergies? This is a popular question and struggle during this school year. We all enjoy the first days of spring, the beautiful weather, but those of us that struggle with allergies and our children who suffer from seasonal allergies, are having a particularly rough time this year. When assessing your student for allergies versus concerns for COVID, remember that some of the symptoms can overlap, if there is any question that your student's symptoms seem to be more than their typical allergy symptoms, it is always best to err on the side of caution and keep them home for observation to better determine their current health situation. If their symptoms are not relieved by their allergy regimen or your student is presenting atypical from their usual symptoms, it is always best to test! Allergies can present with sneezing and watery eyes, these are NOT COVID symptoms. However, allergies and COVID both can present with congestion/runny nose, headache and or sore throat. This is what we call the "gray area" where it could be either issue. Symptoms of fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle aches, chills, or fever should be evaluated with the completion of a COVID PCR test. If your student experiences symptoms in the "gray area" please keep them home, observe, and if no improvement with their allergy medicine, have them follow up with their provider for further evaluation. Most providers will want to complete a COVID test to ensure the symptoms are not COVID, and then will provide an allergy note for students who are suffering from seasonal allergies. It is particularly important that if your student is diagnosed with allergies, to provide a note to the school nurse office

AND to be sure you keep your student on their daily allergy medicine regimen recommended by their provider EVERY DAY throughout the spring season to ensure their symptoms are controlled. IF a provider COVID tests a student, we MUST have their negative PCR results before they can return to school. At this time, we still cannot accept a rapid COVID test for students. (Please note: Bayshore students have access to **same day PCR** tests, these are "rapid" in the sense they are received quickly, but they are PCR results)

### COVID FATIGUE

I think we can ALL agree, we are all tired of the words COVID, social distancing, masks, and flatten the curve. These are words we never thought we would still be talking about over a year later. COVID-19 fatigue and/or burnout refers to when a person has reached his or her capacity to cope with all the stressors this pandemic has brought with it. It effects our mental, emotional, and physical health due to constant stressors; we begin to become desensitized and have more difficulty maintaining precautions. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Numbers are improving daily with the initiation of vaccines, and we are only one month away from school being out for the summer! Let us continue to work together as a team to end this challenging year successfully! Thank you again for your dedication and commitment to working together as a team to keep our OLSS community safe. You have done an AMAZING job this year.

Sincerely,

Brandi Hutchins, OLSS School