

# HANDOUT #1: PARENT TIP SHEET- CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

- Seek and be open to a range of support and education from professionals, groups, and others who have had this experience. Explain to the child why you are getting extra support.
- Work with specialists that have experience with children with mental health needs and who also understand the impact that trauma and loss can have on children's functioning.
- Be an active member of your child's mental health team. Don't hesitate to get second opinions if you have concerns.
- Be proactive and ask for what you and your child need and encourage your child to do the same. Your opinion and insights matter in helping others understand the child. Encourage the child to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Ensure that you are included in the treatment process. There may be additional strategies that will be helpful for you to learn as you parent the child and help them be successful in reaching their goals in life.
- Be open to, but not solely focused on medication. Recognize that even when medication is a good match, needs can change over time. Be sure to report side effects. Report to the clinician if the medication is not having the desired effect.
- If you are a parent who is fostering, be clear on your role and responsibilities when psychotropic medication is prescribed. Ask questions of the child's medical professionals. Parents who are fostering will not be able to give consent (permission) for psychotropic medications. Consent must be signed by the legal parent, guardian, or a judge. The role of the parent who is fostering is to administer any prescribed medication and to be a keen observer and reporter of impacts and/or side effects. See the handout ***Role of Parents Who Are Fostering When Psychotropic Medication Has Been Prescribed.***
- The impact of culture, sexual identity, gender expression, and religious beliefs should be considered in understanding your child's mental health needs. Talk openly with your child and offer support when needed.
- Educate yourself and support children in learning what they need to know. Often, there is misinformation, stigma, and assumptions associated with mental illness, sometimes even misdiagnosis. Be sure you are operating from facts about disorders and treatment. Talk to the child's medical professional and caseworker about your questions and concerns.
- Take good care of yourself. Children need parents who are healthy, strong, stable, and able to model good self-care.
- Mental Health conditions are generally manageable if the child has support and has received an accurate diagnosis. Some conditions are situational, the result of multiple traumas and a child's uncertainty about their future. Have hope and instill it in your child.

