

## Back to School & Mental Health

### Family Advocacy Program

August 2024 FAP/chat

As the summer days give way to the excitement and busyness of the back-to-school season, it's a time filled with anticipation and new beginnings. While we often focus on organizing school supplies and adjusting schedules, it's equally vital to consider the emotional and psychological aspects of this transition. For many, the start of the school year is an opportunity to address not only academic goals but also to support mental health and ensure a safe, nurturing environment for all students.

Supporting mental health as we head back to school includes embracing a positive mindset. A positive mindset can transform challenges into opportunities and foster resilience in students, parents, and educators alike. It's important to:

- **Adopt a Growth Mindset:** Encourage a perspective that views challenges as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks. Celebrate effort and progress rather than focusing solely on outcomes.
- **Practice Positive Affirmations:** Use affirmations to build self-confidence and counteract negative thoughts. Remind yourself and your children of strengths and past successes.
- **Focus on Solutions:** When facing difficulties, prioritize finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems. This proactive approach helps manage stress and fosters a problem-solving attitude.

**Prioritizing self-care:** Self-care is a foundational element of mental well-being. As the school year begins, make sure to maintain a balanced routine. Establish a consistent daily routine that includes time for schoolwork, physical activity, and relaxation. This helps create a sense of stability and predictability.

A consistent routine helps regulate your body's internal clock, promotes better sleep, reduces anxiety, and enhances productivity. By establishing a routine, you can ease into the new school year with greater ease and confidence.

Design a daily schedule that includes dedicated times for schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and relaxation. This helps create a balanced approach to managing responsibilities and downtime. Use tools like planners or digital calendars to map out your day. Try to stick to your daily schedule as closely as possible. Consistent wake-up times, mealtimes, and study sessions can help create a sense of order and predictability, making it easier to manage your day.

Designate a specific area in your home for studying that is quiet, well-lit, and free from distractions. Having a dedicated study space helps signal to your brain that it's time to focus and work. Keep all necessary study materials—books, notebooks, stationery—within easy reach. An organized space reduces the time spent searching for materials and helps maintain focus.

**Incorporate stress-relief techniques:** Engage in mindfulness practices, exercise regularly, and allocate time for hobbies and relaxation. These activities help manage stress and enhance overall well-being.

**Seek Support When Needed:** Encourage open communication about mental health and seek professional support if needed. Therapy or counseling can provide valuable tools and support.

### **Back to School Awareness- Domestic Violence and Child Abuse**

As we focus on back-to-school preparations, it's crucial to acknowledge and address the serious issues of domestic violence and child abuse. These issues can have profound effects on a child's well-being and academic performance.

**Recognizing the signs of domestic violence:** Children living in homes where domestic violence occurs may exhibit signs such as behavioral changes, anxiety, depression, or withdrawal. They may also struggle with concentration and academic performance.

Signs of child abuse can include physical injuries, changes in behavior, unexplained absences from school, or fearfulness around certain adults. Emotional and psychological abuse may manifest as low self-esteem, depression, or difficulty forming relationships.

**Promote open communication:** Foster an environment where children feel safe to express their feelings and concerns. Encourage them to speak up about any

worries or experiences they may have. Providing resources can ensure that families have access to resources and support services, such as counseling, hotlines, and community organizations that address domestic violence and child abuse.

Educate and train educators, parents, and caregivers about recognizing the signs of abuse and domestic violence. Provide training on how to respond appropriately and where to seek help. Offer support and understanding by providing emotional support and practical assistance to affected families. This may include connecting them with social services, legal assistance, or counseling. Work with local organizations and authorities to advocate for policies and programs that protect and support victims of domestic violence and child abuse.

If you need assistance the the **Family Advocacy Program, Employee Assistance Program, and Military OneSource** are valuable resources available to military personnel, their families, and civilian employees. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the **Family Advocacy Program at 717-770-7066**.