

- April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to celebrate the good things our communities do to promote healthy child development and help prevent child abuse and neglect.
- We know that mental health is connected to social, emotional, and cognitive development and is a foundation for a healthy life, healthy community, and healthy state.
- When children's mental health needs are met, they are more likely to do better in school, graduate, and more likely to be healthy, productive adults in our community.
- All children have mental health, even infants and very young children. Children are not little adults. The mental health needs of children are similar, but different than adults. Children's Mental Health efforts should focus on the unique needs of children and their families.
- The architecture of a child's brain is built over time. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) such as community violence or parental substance abuse can damage brain architecture, but secure, loving relationships, stimulating experiences, and healthy environments can build a solid foundation to support children into adulthood. Health promotion, prevention, and early intervention for children's mental health needs, particularly when experiencing ACEs, is essential to aid in healthy development.
- According to the National Institute of Mental Health (nimh.nih.gov),
 - Eight percent of youth have an anxiety disorder,
 - Ten percent of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder,
 - Twenty percent of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition,
 - Eleven percent of youth have a mood disorder
- We all have a role to play in healthy child development, and our goal this April is to help others recognize that role and the ways we can maximize our impact.
- We encourage adults to know the signs of youth mental health concerns, and be a trusting adult, ready to listen non-judgmentally and encourage appropriate professional support.
 - Signs of Mental Health Concerns in Children: Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following: www.nami.org
 - Changes in school performance
 - Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
 - Hyperactive behavior
 - Frequent nightmares
 - Frequent disobedience or aggression
 - Frequent temper tantrums
 - Don't be afraid to reach out if you or someone you know needs help. Learning all you can about mental health is an important first step. Reach out to your health insurance, primary care provider or state/county mental health authority for more resources.

For more information, please visit www.pcaiowa.org , www.nami.org or Stephanie Claussen, Community Health Coordinator , Adair County Health System 641-743-6173 or sclaussen@adaircountyhealthsystem.org

25 WAYS TO BE A LOVING PARENT

Every day, you show your children in dozens of ways how you feel about them. Here are some new suggestions - from serious to silly - to show your kids how much you love them.

- Help your child with their schoolwork.
- Giggle together - share silly knock-knock jokes.
- Bury a family time capsule and dig it up five years later.
- Have a backward dinner - serve dessert first!
- Look through your family photo albums together.
- Ask your child to draw a portrait of your family and then frame it.
- Schedule regular Family Meetings where everyone gets to share their opinion.
- Start a once-a-season parent/child date night complete with dinner and a movie.
- Give your child the gift of culture - take them to a museum, symphony, or play.
- Start a collection together - anything from coins to seashells will work.
- Take family walks after dinner.
- Sit down at the table together to eat meals.
- Give your child choices about what to wear, eat, do, etc.
- Set realistic rules and expectations and make sure your child understands them.
- Be a good role model.
- Find time each day to talk one-on-one with your child.
- Praise and encourage your child daily.
- Give your children age-appropriate responsibilities.
- Put a funny note in their lunch box.
- Stick to your rules and be fair.
- Be patient!
- Let them know when you catch them being good.
- Tell them how thankful you are they are your children.
- Trust your child and let them know you respect them.
- Hug your child every day.