

## Reader's Letter: Mental health services for Charles County students

Posted by [Dick Myers](#) On 08/26/2014



As students return to the routine of the school year, some will face additional challenges. Each year at least 10 percent of children will struggle with a mental health issue such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, or eating disorders.

As a concerned parent and aspiring social worker, I recently had the opportunity to talk to Superintendent of Charles County Public Schools Kimberly Hill and Director of Student Services Dr. Patricia Vaira about what our schools do to help youth with mental health problems. Across the country, schools are often on the front lines of recognizing and treating youth with mental health problems and Charles County is no different.

Despite recent budget concerns, the school system will continue to offer a range of high-quality services to youth with mental health concerns. School staff is trained through the American Psychiatric Foundation's "Typical or Troubled?" program to recognize what Superintendent Hill calls mental health "red flags."

Superintendent Hill emphasized the importance of strong relationships among school staff, families, and students, which allow the schools to provide an individualized approach to meet each student's needs. Students may be supported by a Student Services Team, which can include teachers, administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, and a student's parents. Students with more complex needs might have the option to attend one of several schools in the county with EA or "Emotional Adjustment" programs that allow students to continue to study while receiving additional supports in modified environments.

And, the county is interested in continuing to improve—all six high schools are participating in the Safe and Supportive Schools study to measure conditions for learning, including mental health services and drug and alcohol abuse prevention activities.

So if your child heading back to school has a diagnosed mental health condition or you are concerned about a behavioral problem: be open with their teachers, school staff, and administrators—the Charles County Public School system is prepared to help your child achieve their best success.

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