



Mark Kuppe,  
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Chief Executive  
Officer

## From the CEO...

Recently, I was sitting in the locker room of a local fitness center exhausted from my workout. While contemplating on my aches and pains, a father and his two sons walked in to get ready to swim. Quickly I observed that one of his sons clearly had attention problems. His behavior also spilled over to his brother and challenged his father's energy and effort. But as I observed this father, my exhaustion soon turned to admiration for his patient, gentle, consistent and loving behavior with his sons. It was clear that he understood the challenges his son faced and what his son needed from him to overcome his difficulties.

Over the years I have served on many committees and task forces both locally and for the state on children's mental health. I have had the opportunity to partner with many parents who are faced with raising children who have an emotional disorder. Unfortunately, the experience told by many of these parents is one of being blamed. Emotional disorders for many children show up as behaviors and behaviors often lead us to make judgments about parenting. These parents often feel alone and exhausted. Raising a child with an emotional disorder is a challenging journey.

At HSI, partnership with parents is a focus and practice we believe in and desire to promote. Parents deserve to be heard and supported in their journey. Our role is to listen to them with understanding and compassion, to help provide them with information and education regarding their child's disorder, and to provide the appropriate treatment and supports needed to be successful at raising their child. Successful parent partnerships lead to success at home, school and community for children with emotional disorders.

I did not know that father in the locker room, but I felt compelled to take the time to tell him that I noticed how wonderful he was with his sons. It was what I could do at that moment to support and partner with him in his journey. As he looked up at me with a smile he said, "Really? Thank you very much for saying that."

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Chief Executive Officer

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## Statewide Initiative for Fetal Alcohol

The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Regional Network (FASDRN), a program of the Washington County Children's Mental Health Action Collaborative, has been awarded a grant from the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Statewide Initiative of the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Washington County and Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaboratives, the Washington County Chemical Health Action Collaborative and HSI are collaboratively working to improve the early identification of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and develop more effective programming and resources while increasing awareness within the Twin Cities metropolitan region.

FASD is caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy and is the leading cause of mental retardation in North America, although most individuals with FASD have an average intelligence. The brain damage from prenatal exposure to alcohol affects behavior and the lives of affected individuals are often riddled with problems in family relationships, school and in the community. Early identification of FASD and access to services are key factors in better outcomes for the affected individual and their family.

The Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Statewide Initiative provides this funding through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Health. For further information, contact Cathy Luiken, HSI's FASD Project Coordinator at 651-351-3152.

## HSI

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Human Services, Inc.  
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## HSI Connection

### FEATURE FOCUS

One in five children has a mental illness that causes problems in at least one area of their life (home, school, and relationships). Youth who have undiagnosed or untreated mental illness are two to four times more likely to have issues with substance abuse.

Like more information about our services?  
Call 651-777-5222 or visit [www.hsicare.org](http://www.hsicare.org)

## CHANGE A LIFE TODAY

### Sponsorships for you, your family or place of business

**LIFT A CHILD SPONSORSHIP** offers special support to children in our community who may not have a bike, glasses, or have other special needs. This sponsorship also helps provide special items children need to support their recovery (\$500)

**PEER MENTOR SPONSORSHIP** helps build a guiding, supportive relationship between two persons with Severe Persistent Mental Illness - one further along in their recovery that can identify a crisis, offer social support, and connect the mentee with resources. (\$600)

**MEALS ON WHEELS SPONSORSHIP** offers 125 hot meals for elders or persons with disabilities who cannot afford them. (\$500)

**QUALITY OF LIFE SPONSORSHIP** offers support to a senior who needs help to achieve quality of life. This may mean a hearing aid, dental work, help with an important prescription, a new mattress, home cleaning, etc. (\$300)

**MOVING FORWARD SPONSORSHIP** supports individuals who are building a new life as they move forward in their recovery including sober housing, emergency funds, and employment support. (\$400)

**EMERGENCY FUND SPONSORSHIP** helps victims of domestic or sexual violence buy food, personal items, gas, and shelter for themselves and their children. (\$300)

For more information about these special sponsorships, call Joyce at 651-251-5079 or email [jflynn@hsicare.org](mailto:jflynn@hsicare.org).



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# HSI Connection

Helping People • Changing Lives

## The Realities of Children and Mental Health

### Recent studies by the United States Surgeon General and Department of Health and Human Services Departments show that:

- ✓ One in five children has a mental illness that causes problems in at least one area of their life (home, school, and relationships).
- ✓ Of the children who have a disorder, only one-third are diagnosed or treated for their condition.
- ✓ Youth who have undiagnosed or untreated mental illness are two to four times more likely to have issues with substance abuse.
- ✓ Almost half of all teens who have a mental disorder drop out of high school.

Corey, a three-year-old, lashes out and bites another child when his childcare provider asks the group to prepare for lunch. He screams and runs wildly around the room before naptime. Over the past several months, his childcare has tried to use different approaches to help change his behavior. Unsuccessful with their attempts, the provider has had to repeatedly ask his mother to leave work and pick him up early.

Refusing to go to school, twelve-year-old Sarah stays in bed most of the day. She is sad and tearful, avoids friends, and is unwilling to talk about what is troubling her.

Josh, seventeen, avoids all of his parent's rules and frequently doesn't come home overnight. He is experimenting with drugs and failing almost every class at school.

When we think of childhood, we often think of innocence and carefree days. For most people, childhood is a time to play, learn and grow, make friends and have fun. Unfortunately, this is not the case for all children. Some children struggle with mental health disorders, such as depression or anxiety disorders, which also cause problems with their ability to function in everyday activities. But when diagnosed early and given appropriate treatment, symptoms of emotional disorders may be altered.

Just like physical health, mental health can have a major impact on a child's growth and development. When a child struggles with an emotional disorder, they may experience difficulty in their ability to relate with others, make friends, concentrate in school, participate in activities, or even get out of bed.

The challenge with mental health disorders in children is that many parents, caregivers and teachers may not recognize the symptoms in order to help the child. Many mental health conditions and disorders can appear to be a natural part of development while others are mistaken for delinquent behavior. There is also still a great deal of stigma around mental health difficulties

in children. Parents may fear that they will be seen as bad parents or worry that the child will be teased. The long-term effects of an undiagnosed or untreated mental health disorder can impact the life of a child long into adulthood. Mental health disorders can inhibit learning or make school exceedingly difficult, resulting in a higher drop out rate and employment problems. In youth, mental health disorders have also been shown to lead to increased substance abuse and risk for delinquent behavior and suicide. **The good news is that when caught early and given appropriate treatment, mental health disorders can be positively impacted.** The answer is to understand what mental health disorders look like in children and adolescents.

### What Causes Mental Health Disorders in Children?

Just as we don't know exactly what causes a cold, there is no one answer to what causes mental health disorders in children. Although we may not know the exact cause, there are both biological and environmental issues that can have an impact on whether or not a child develops a mental health disorder.

Genetics can play a role in some disorders. Children who have parents who have depression or ADHD are more likely to develop it than those who do not. Environmental toxins, such as lead and mercury, have been shown to contribute to the onset of some illnesses. Drug or alcohol use during pregnancy can have an impact on fetal brain development, making it more likely that a disorder will develop. Some mental health disorders have been linked to special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. If these chemicals are out of balance or not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to mental health difficulties.

Children who are witnesses to violence, have experienced traumatic events, live in poverty, are exposed to chemical abuse by their caregiver, or who don't have adequate support systems may

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be more likely to develop a disorder. But not all children who experience these things will develop a mental health disorder, and children who have a disorder don't necessarily have problems in their home life. Mental health disorders are seen in all income, race, and social levels.

Pam Johnson, HSI's Director of the Child, Family and Chemical Health Division comments, "It is very important for a child to receive a thorough assessment which includes an understanding of the child's individual mental health needs as well as their relationships at home, school and community. This assessment will guide the treatment which targets all areas of a child's life and leads to the most positive outcomes."

### How Do You Know When a Child is Suffering from a Mental Health Disorder?

The answer lies in the severity and frequency of the behavior.

The problem with mental health disorders in children is that kids go through many different stages as they mature. As part of these stages, they show behaviors that are similar to those expressed by children who are not dealing with a mental health disorder. All children have times when they have tantrums, or seem very hyperactive, or have moods. But when a child is more hyper than not, or has problems being able to regulate themselves in normal circumstances, it can indicate that they may have ADHD. If a teenager is sad and teary or irritable for weeks on end, and it seems to be getting more severe, they may be suffering from depression. If you have a sense that something is not right with your child or one of your students, the best recommendation is to have them evaluated, by a physician or a mental health professional.

A mental health diagnosis for a child is given when their behavioral and emotional responses match a very specific diagnostic criteria. There are many categories of diagnoses, but some of the most common include: Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, Depression, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Bi-Polar Disorder and Disruptive Behavioral Disorder. When a child has a mental health diagnosis, as well as extremely poor functioning at home, school and the community, they are referred to as severely emotionally disturbed (SED). This mental health category may allow the child to receive more intensive services such as in-home treatment or day treatment services.

### Undiagnosed or Untreated — Long Term Effects

The longer a mental health disorder is left undiagnosed or untreated, the more likely it is to cause greater harm. Because a child's brain is still growing, mental health disorders in children present the

potential for problems that interfere with their development. It is during childhood that we learn how to build relationships, explore new worlds, and develop skills that will help us in adulthood. Mental health disorders interrupt that process and can contribute to greater problems further down the road if not treated.

A child with symptoms of ADHD who is not treated may continue to struggle in school. Without help to stay focused or learning ways to filter out distractions, children are likely to give up or continue to feel like failures and may later drop out of school.

When a child struggles with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, they may have a hard time adjusting to new routines, making friends or connecting with family. This can lead to isolation and loneliness.

A child with a mood or emotional disorder may not learn to regulate their emotions, causing them to lash out at friends and family or lean on substances to ease the pain of their daily lives. Without intervention they may find themselves getting into criminal activity.

There is an indication that if a child develops a disorder once, it may be more likely to recur. "If we can identify and intervene early, the hope is we will be able to alter the severity and outcome of the illness. It is important to think of emotional disorders in children as more than simply brain disorders. Attention to important relationships in the child's life and other social factors are likely to be critical in achieving best outcome." states Dr. Robert Perzacki, HSI Child Psychiatrist.

### Help is Available

Mental health disorders can be treated. The sooner a child can get help, the more manageable the mental health concerns may be and the greater chance of recovery.

HSI offers a wide variety of services for families who are struggling to help a child or adolescent with mental health disorders. Services ranging from psychiatric care, individual and family therapy, in-home treatment and day treatment programs for children who have illnesses severe enough that they impact the ability to attend their traditional school.

HSI is part of a statewide network of community mental health centers, and is committed to providing affordable behavioral health services. HSI is a provider for Medical Assistance-Pre-paid Medical Assistance Programs (PMAP), Medicare, and MinnesotaCare, as well as a large number of commercial insurance plans. For further information or help with child mental health disorder call 651-777-5222 for an appointment, or just to talk with a trained mental health professional.

## A Unique Program for Young Children

Although many mental health disorders show up during the school and adolescent years, some children have problems as early as their toddler and preschool days. For children who show early signs of emotional disturbances, HSI Early Childhood Behavioral Assistance Program (ECBA) was developed to help young children and their families.

ECBA seeks to help Washington County children age birth to 5 years who display severe/disruptive behavior problems and whose needs are greater than those provided by other services. The program provides in-home and childcare intervention and consultation, therapeutic child-parent classes, and community education. Services are tailored to meet the unique needs of each family. Funded through private donations and the United Ways, mental health professionals work with childcare providers, preschool teachers and parents to understand their child's behavior and learn strategies to prevent the constant tantrums and aggression. The goal is to decrease disruptive behaviors in the home

and childcare, prevent the development of more significant mental health disorders, and promote healthy families and childcare environments. ECBA offers hope for families who are struggling with behaviors that seem out of the ordinary for even a normal toddler, or who are facing the threat of having their child removed from yet another childcare or preschool setting. If this goal is met, children will be more likely to be successful in school.

"We're seeing so many more children with intense mental health needs," states Tracey Bishop, program coordinator of HSI ECBA Program. People have to realize that if we don't intervene now, we're going to have to intervene later in life. A lot of our work is about teaching children self-regulation, which I think is so much more effective than a disciplinary response."

HSI's ECBA Program works closely with other community agencies that provide early childhood services, Washington County Public Health and local school districts Early Childhood Family Education/Special Education (ECFE/SE). ECBA staff work closely with these agencies and careful planning prevents duplication of services. Bishop states, "By working with families and going to the childcare setting, ECBA staff is able to improve interactions between parent and child and help childcare providers better understand mental illness and how it effects children in their setting." **For more information about the Early Childhood Behavior Assistance Program contact Tracey Bishop at [tbishop@hsicare.org](mailto:tbishop@hsicare.org).**



## Resources & Support

Our community is fortunate to have a very active collaboration of organizations that are committed to the provision of quality mental health care to children and their families. The Children's Mental Health Action Collaborative meets monthly to discuss gaps and needs in the service system, as well as ensure the smooth delivery of available resources. Consisting of fourteen child-serving agencies and special education departments, the Collaborative is also active in bringing financial resources to our community. Active Collaborative members include:

**HSI**  
Stillwater, Oakdale,  
Cottage Grove,  
Forest Lake  
651-777-5222

**Washington County  
Public Health**  
651-430-6655

**Youth Service Bureau**  
Stillwater, Cottage Grove  
651-439-8800

**Washington County  
Community Services**  
651-430-6455

**Washington County  
Community Corrections**  
651-430-6900

**Special Education  
available in  
School Districts**  
622, 624, 831,  
832, 833, 834

## HSI Locations

8451 E. Pt. Douglas Rd.  
Cottage Grove, MN 55016  
651-458-4116

121 11th Ave. S.E.  
Forest Lake, MN 55025  
651-251-5220

7066 Stillwater Blvd. N.  
Oakdale, MN 55128  
651-777-5222

375 East Orleans St.  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
651-430-2720

TDD: 651-770-6834

**24 Hour Mental  
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651-777-5222

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**[www.hsicare.org](http://www.hsicare.org)**

## Mental Health and Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency and involvement in the legal system are possible long-term effects of undiagnosed or untreated mental illness. The challenge with a number of mental disorders is that, on the surface, they may look more like bad behavior than a sign of something more serious. Whether it's the acting out of a child whose comfortable routine has been disrupted, the risk-taking behavior of a child in need of additional stimulation, or the inability to stay on task, parents and school officials are more likely to punish the act than try to understand what lies behind the behavior.

When a child gets in trouble for behavior that they themselves don't understand, it's easy for them to fall into the trap of thinking that they are "bad." School failure and poor relationships can have an adverse effect on children who are trying to determine who they are and what their life offers them for the future. Kristin Tuenge, Deputy Director of Community Corrections for Washington County, says that our county has taken an active step in helping prevent continuing delinquency issues with local youth. "When a child enters the probation system, we automatically require a mental health screening to determine if there are underlying issues that could be affecting the behavior. If a youth commits a felony level crime, we recommend a court ordered psychological assessment due to the severity of consequences for those crimes." She also indicated that current legislation placing youth on trial as adults can have a major impact on the county's ability to help adolescents with mental disorders. "It is a grave concern when courts ask to try teens as adults because the reality of an underlying mental illness can be significant. With disorders such as ADHD and anxiety or depression, a lot of teens are impulsive and don't think before they act, especially when they are encouraged by their peers to do something that they otherwise would not."

A study by the Department of Health and Human Services shows that 60% of adolescents with substance abuse problems also have a mental health condition, and teens with behavioral disorders

such as attention deficit are more likely to develop substance addictions. When a juvenile comes in contact with the justice system for drug or alcohol related crimes they are treated for the addiction, but not the underlying mental health condition. The national average estimates that roughly two-thirds of youth who have been involved with the legal system are dealing with a mental disorder. Tuenge notes that Washington County's rates are lower, which she attributes to collaborations between the probation department and community services. "We are aware of the role that mental health plays, so we make a conscious effort to make sure all probation staff are up to date on mental health issues and their impact on juvenile justice. We also work with HSI, school districts and family treatment programs to try to prevent recurrence. Some parents don't acknowledge a problem with mental health until their child is in trouble with the law, but we do see a lot of kids get help because parents have requested it. A lot of parents are seeking voluntary services, but unfortunately the need is greater than the capacity."

Untreated mental health issues in children can also have far-reaching effects on the community. When a youth is incarcerated, the cost comes back to the general public. Additionally, crimes leave behind victims who are left to deal with the aftermath, whether it is from stealing, destruction of property, or assault. Another cost to our communities is the need for out-of-home placement. Due to the delay in getting an accurate diagnosis or providing appropriate services, some children require more intense services in an institutional setting. If a child or adolescent is having behavior issues that are dangerous to other family members or increasing issues with law enforcement, some parents look to the foster care system. The breakdown of family and support systems due to untreated mental health disorders contributes to continuing feelings of failure and rejection for the child and family.

### Important Information:

The information that is provided in this newsletter is not to be used to diagnose individual cases. Each individual is unique, and only a professional health-care provider is qualified to diagnose illness and prescribe treatment.

### Additional Resources

**24-Hour Mental  
Health Crisis Line**  
651-777-5222

**Washington County  
Alliance for the Mentally III**  
651-439 3800

**National Alliance on  
Mental Illness (NAMI)**  
Minnesota Chapter  
651-645-2948

**Minnesota Association for  
Children's Mental Health**  
651-644-7333