

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



The Mississippi Department of Mental Health is working to change the way you think about mental health. One of the most difficult challenges the field of mental health faces in Mississippi is stigma. Our goal is to eliminate misconceptions and promote a better understanding of mental health and illnesses. The following information is a way to help you "Think Again" about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and understand the related issues.

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common mental disorders that develops in children. Children with ADHD have impaired functioning in multiple settings, including home, school, and in relationships with peers. If untreated, the disorder can have long-term adverse effects into adolescence and adulthood. Although ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, it is not a disorder limited to children - ADHD often persists into adolescence and adulthood and is frequently not diagnosed until later years.

What are the Signs & Symptoms of this disorder?

Symptoms of ADHD will appear over the course of many months, and include:

- Impulsiveness: a child who acts quickly without thinking first.
- Hyperactivity: a child who can't sit still, walks, runs, or climbs around when others are seated, talks when others are talking.
- Inattention: a child who daydreams or seems to be in another world, is sidetracked by what is going on around him or her.

How is it diagnosed?

If ADHD is suspected, the diagnosis should be made by a professional with training in ADHD. This includes child psychiatrists, psychologists, developmental/behavioral pediatricians, behavioral neurologists, and clinical social workers. After ruling out other possible reasons for the child's behavior, the specialist checks the child's school and medical records and talks to teachers and parents who have filled out a behavior rating scale for the child. A diagnosis is made only after all this information has been considered.

What type of treatment is available?

Effective treatments for ADHD are available, and include behavioral therapy and medications. For more information, please contact the Mississippi Department of Mental Health at (601) 359-1288 or your local community mental health center.