

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

During the life of a case, a child experiences many situations that may impact his/her mental health. The following is a list of some behavioral indicators, the presence of which requires a new mental health screening if the previous screening was negative or action to ensure the most appropriate services are being provided. This is not an exhaustive list, and is meant to serve as a guide only. The worker is encouraged to seek an assessment for any child who is demonstrating behaviors that are markedly different from his/her prior functioning.

Children under the age of 5

0-18 Months
▪ Crying that is excessive in intensity, frequency or duration
▪ "Floppiness" or stiffening when held or touched
▪ Cannot be consoled by caregiver
▪ Makes or maintains no eye contact
▪ Does not vocalize (e.g. "coo"), cry or smile
▪ Does not respond to caregiver
▪ Does not respond to environment
▪ Pattern of difficulty getting to sleep or sleeping through the night (after 1 year of age)
▪ Persisting arching
▪ Persistent and excessive feeding problems
▪ Predominantly sad, anxious, or fearful mood
▪ Interaction with others does not appear to be pleasing
18-36 Months
▪ <i>Any of the behaviors for 0-18 months and:</i>
▪ Extremely destructive, disruptive, dangerous or violent behavior
▪ Excessive or repetitive self-injurious behavior (e.g. rocking, finger flicking, masturbation, hand-flapping or spinning in circles)
▪ Excessive or frequent tantrums
▪ Appears to have an absence of fear or awareness of danger or pain
▪ Persistent and intentional aggression despite reasonable adult intervention
▪ Rigid focus on unusual objects, routines or rituals
▪ Does not seek caretaker/adult to meet needs
▪ Prolonged crying when caregiver leaves the room/home or has no preference for caregiver or is willing to walk away with strangers
▪ Does not explore environment or play; does not seek caretaker/adult to meet needs (e.g. solace, play, assistance); fails to initiate interaction or share attention with others whom s/he is familiar
▪ Few or no words; fails to respond to verbal cues
▪ Pattern of self-injurious behavior
▪ Unaware or uninvolved in surroundings

3-5 Years
▪ <i>Any of the behaviors for 0-18 months and 18-36 months and:</i>
▪ The child experiences frequent night terrors.
▪ Excessive preoccupation with routine, objects or actions (e.g. hand washing – becomes distraught if interrupted, etc.)
▪ Extreme hyperactivity, excessively “accident- prone”
▪ Does not use sentences of 3 or more words
▪ The child is excessively withdrawn.
▪ Speech is unintelligible
▪ Clear and significant loss of previously attained skills
▪ Extremely poor coordination of movement (e.g. extremely clumsy)
▪ Does not play or interact with peers
▪ Unusual eating patterns (e.g. refuses to eat, overeats, repetitive ingestion of nonfood items)

5 Years to Adult
▪ The child/youth has been a danger to him/herself or to others in the last 90 days.
▪ The child/youth has experienced physical or sexual abuse, extreme or chronic neglect, or has been exposed to extreme violent behavior in his/her home or community; been abducted, or experienced the death of a family member or close friend in last 90 days.
▪ It is reported, observed or disclosed that the child has threatened to harm or actively hurt other people; attempted suicide; made suicidal gestures; expressed suicidal thoughts; assaultive to other children or adults; reckless and/or puts self in dangerous situations; attempts to or has sexually assaulted or molested other children, etc.
▪ Child has significant bruising, is poorly groomed, inadequately clothes, hungry or appears malnourished. It is reported or disclosed that the child was subjected to or witnessed extreme physical abuse, domestic violence or sexual abuse, or child was abducted by stranger(s) or family member(s) observed torture, sexual or physical assault, or witnessed murder.
▪ The child/youth has exhibited bizarre or unusual behaviors in the last 90 days.
▪ It is observed, reported or disclosed that child has a history or pattern of fire-setting; cruelty to animals.
▪ Excessive noncompliance; constantly challenges the authority of caregiver; requires total attention of caregiver; disruptive levels of activity; wanders the house at night
▪ Appears to hear voices, see things, or feel things others do not (including alcohol or drug induced)
▪ Cutting, burning or deep scratching of self
▪ Repetitive body motions (e.g., head banging) or involuntary repetition of words, phrases or sounds (e.g., echolalia); smears feces; etc.
▪ Difficulty making and maintaining healthy relationships.
▪ Experienced problems with personal care; eats/drinks substances that are not food; regularly wets/soils self (subject to the age of child); extremely poor hygiene; significant weight gain/loss in short period of time.
▪ History of psychiatric hospitalization, psychiatric care or prescribed psychiatric medication
▪ Significant problems managing his/her feelings; severe temper tantrums; screams

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ uncontrollably; cries often; withdrawn; whines ▪ or pouts excessively; expresses others are out to get him/her; worries excessively and ▪ preoccupied compulsively with minor annoyances; expresses feelings of ▪ worthlessness or inferiority; appears sad and depressed; constantly restless or overactive)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child is known to abuse alcohol or drugs

All Ages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth has been a victim of physical sexual abuse and or severe neglect while under DCFS supervision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The child has returned from being a runaway or a victim of child abduction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The child has experienced a major life event in the last 90 days (e.g., death of a family member or friend; parent's marriage/divorce of parent's arrest and incarceration; birth of a sibling, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth has been exposed to extreme violent behavior or trauma while under DCFS supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth has been in two or more placements in the last 90 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth has experienced a school expulsion or suspension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth is removed from the home of a parent due to a failed VFM or court ordered FM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child/youth has been involved in the juvenile system (e.g. arrested, been placed on informal probation, and/or had contact with Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court in the last 90 days