



# Building Bridges For Children's Mental Health

## Behavioral Health Facts and Classroom Tips\*

For use with Positive Behavior Supports & Response to Intervention

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

## Symptoms or Behaviors

The U.S Department of Health and Human Services lists three forms of ADHD, each with different symptoms.

When untreated, children with **inattentive disorder** may:

- Have short attention spans
- Have problems with organization
- Fail to pay attention to details
- Be unable to maintain attention
- Be easily distracted
- Have trouble listening even when spoken to directly
- Fail to finish their work
- Make lots of mistakes
- Be forgetful

When untreated, children with **hyperactive-impulsive disorder** may:

- Fidget and squirm
- Have difficulty staying seated
- Run around and/or climb on things excessively
- Have trouble playing quietly
- Be "on the go" as if "driven by a motor"
- Talk too much
- Blur out an answer before a question is completed
- Have trouble taking turns in games or activities
- Interrupt or intrude on others

When untreated, children with **combined attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder** may:

Show symptoms of both inattention and hyperactivity or impulsivity

## Information for Parents & Teachers

All mental health concerns are treatable. More progress can be made by a coordinated partnership between school and home. It is recommended that with family consent, all community partners involved with the family work together.

Children and teens with ADHD may show behaviors consistent with over-activity, and have a more difficult time than their peers in paying attention and staying on task.

More boys than girls are diagnosed with ADHD, and it is the leading cause of referrals to mental health professionals and special education programs, as well as the juvenile justice system.

Students with ADHD are at higher risk for learning disorders, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder including poor peer relations, and mood disorders such as depression.

### Benefits of Early Intervention

If you suspect that a student has ADHD, refer the student to your school mental health practitioner for an evaluation and/or assessment. Given proper treatment and a proactive approach, children will be successful in school and in addressing symptoms. Children benefit from clinical treatment, behavioral strategies, and medications.

Support from family, school, friends, and peers can be an important part of recovery. With sensitivity, support, and help from mental health professionals, a child can lead a healthy and productive life.

Mental health professionals will work with the family and school to find ways to teach children with ADHD more effectively.

Remember that ADHD is a neurobiological disorder. People with the disorder may also have difficulty maintaining friendships, and their self esteem will suffer from experiencing frequent failure because of their disability.

Questions? Request an in-service at your school

## Possible Educational Implications

Students with ADHD may lose books, supplies, and homework. They tend to lack self-control and may blurt out answers before teachers can finish asking the question.

Watch for:

- Students who frequently become "spacey" and off-task
- Tendency for students to see themselves as bad
- Tendency to be viewed as "lazy"
- Behavior problems that consistently disrupt class activities
- Poor social skills or few friendships
- Difficulty with self calming

Students can't get organized or learn social skills on their own, but you can find interventions that greatly increase their capacity to succeed academically and socially in school and at home.

Children with ADHD are often misunderstood as purposefully engaging in disruptive or disrespectful behavior when in fact they are unable to control

\* Behavioral Health refers to mental health and substance use disorders



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### Targeted Pro-Active Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Students with ADHD need frequent opportunities for movement – taking away recess or gym is not a good consequence for inappropriate behavior.
- Punishment will not motivate a student with ADHD to be more attentive or less hyper.
- Break down assignments into manageable smaller tasks.
- Have the student repeat back instructions.
- Post rules, schedules, and assignments. Have set times for specific tasks.
- Use graphic organizers that are color coded to structure the student's schoolwork.
- Teach study skills and learning strategies, and reinforce these regularly.
- Teacher directed tasks are more effective than independent seat-work activities.
- Give much encouragement, praise and affection as students with ADHD are easily discouraged.
- Rewards will lose their reinforcing power quickly and must be changed or rotated frequently.
- It is essential that students be frequently reinforced for what we want them to do, rather than simply punished for what we do not want them to do.

### Resources

**About.com: Helping the student with ADHD in the classroom: Strategies for teachers,**  
<http://specialchildren.about.com/>

**ADHD Blog,** [www.4-adhd.com/blog/index.htm](http://www.4-adhd.com/blog/index.htm)  
*Information & resources for parents of children and teens with ADD/ADHD*

**Attention Deficit Information Network,** [www.addinfonet.org](http://www.addinfonet.org)  
781-455-9895, *Support, information, community resources*

**Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD),**  
[www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org), 301-306-7070, 800-233-4050, *Support, information, resource center*

**Colorado Department of Education: Fast Facts,**  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-EBP\\_MH\\_ADHD.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-EBP_MH_ADHD.pdf)

**Colorado Division of Behavioral Health,** [www.cdhs.state.co.us/dmh](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dmh)  
*Resource for mental health for all citizens of Colorado*

**Empower Colorado,** <http://www.empowercolorado.com/>

**Federation of Families for Children's Mental health ~ Colorado Chapter,**  
<http://www.coloradofederation.org/>

**Parent Education and Assistance for Kids (PEAK),** [www.peakparent.org](http://www.peakparent.org)

**SAMHSA'S National Mental Health Information Center,** [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)  
800-789-2647

**The Children's Hospital,**  
[www.thechildrenshospital.org/wellness/info/parents/21612.aspx](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/wellness/info/parents/21612.aspx)  
*Information, articles and related information*

#### Publications:

*Identifying and Treating Attention Deficit\* Hyperactivity Disorder: A Resource for School and Home,* a report by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003.

*Teaching Children with Attention Deficit\* Hyperactivity Disorder: Instructional Strategies and Practices,* a report by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2004.

*Teaching the Tiger: A Handbook for Individuals Involved in the Education of Students with Attention Deficit Disorders, Tourette Syndrome, or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder,* by Marilyn P. Dornbush and Sheryl Pruitt, Hope Press, 1996. Available from [www.hopepress.com](http://www.hopepress.com)

\* Available from the Department's website at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or by calling 877-433-7827.

While it is important to respect a child's need for confidentiality, if you work with children or families, you are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

According to CDE Guidelines, if you suspect possible abuse, you are legally required to report your suspicions to the designated agencies immediately. This legal responsibility is not satisfied by merely reporting your suspicion to other school personnel.

Both a verbal and a written report are required. Please see a standard form for a written report in "Preventing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect", available at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/pichildabus.e.htm>

This fact sheet must not be used for the purpose of making a diagnosis. It is to be used only as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of behaviors and mental health issues you may encounter in your classroom.