

FREE
your
FEELS™

**BACK
TO
SCHOOL**

RESOURCE TOOLKIT



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**BACK
TO
SCHOOL**

INTRO



It's back-to-school season for many! The transition back to a school setting can be a challenging time, filled with a mix of excitement and stress. For **students**, navigating new academic and social pressures (new classes, homework, and/or making friends) can take a toll on their mental well-being. **Teachers** face the demands of creating a nurturing learning environment while managing their own stressors. **Parents**, too, face their own concerns about their children's academic success and social interactions while also balancing work and family life. This toolkit is designed to equip each of these groups with the knowledge, strategies, and resources to foster mental resilience and well-being during this time. Together, we can make sure that going back to school is a positive and empowering experience for all!

ACTION:



Free Your Feels socials will be focused on back-to-school content all month long! Make sure you are following along!
[@freeyourfeelsga](https://www.instagram.com/freeyourfeelsga)



FOR URGENT SUPPORT TEXT OR CALL 988, OR CALL OR DOWNLOAD GCAL: 1-800-715-4225



BACKGROUND



According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, **1 in 5 U.S. children ages 3–17 has a mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorder.** Unfortunately, many of these children don't get the help they need, which can lead to immediate and long-term challenges, including a significant impact on their education. Given that students spend most of their time at school, it's the perfect setting to identify and address behavioral health issues. To understand the youth behavioral health landscape in Georgia and the importance of school-based behavioral health services, check out these two factsheets:

School-Based Mental Health Programs

School-based mental health programs are well-positioned to provide a continuum of behavioral health care to students and their families. The following provides an overview of select school-based mental health programs:

- County with at least one school implementing the Georgia Aops Program (school-based mental health services)
- No schools with Georgia Aops Program
- Project Aops
- Comprehensive school-based health centers (SBHC)

Supportive Initiatives

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' (DBHDD) Prevention Clubhouses:
Gwinnett, Terrell, Troup

DBHDD Mental Health Resiliency Clubhouses:
Barrow, Butts, Dougherty, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Laurens, Newton, Oconee, Rabun, Sumter, Thomas, Wilcox

DBHDD Recovery Support Clubhouses:
Bartow, Chatham, Douglas, Fannin, Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Macon-Douglas

Medical Mobile Unit:
Chatham, DeKalb, Fulton

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): See [Voices' PBIS factsheet here](#)

Please note that some services and supports are only available in a certain school district or school and are not comprehensive.

As of September 2022, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) had coordinated 1,204 Mental Health Awareness Trainings (MHAT) for 32,444 educators and school staff, including:

- Trauma 101
- Brain 101
- Trauma to Resilience
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Psychological Safety

Please note: this list is not comprehensive.

Voices www.georgiavoices.org 09/22

1) Crisis in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health



2) School-Based Mental Health Programs



Crisis in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

Nationally, 2 in 10 children have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions. Undiagnosed, untreated, or inadequately treated conditions can result in poor immediate as well as lifelong outcomes, including significant impact to a child's education. Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, or developmental delays are twice as likely to be chronically absent from school compared to kids without these conditions.

The Youth Behavioral Health Landscape in Georgia

Georgia Kids in Crisis

- In Georgia, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth ages 10-17.
- 48% of children ages 3-17 struggle to or are not able to access needed mental health treatment and counseling.
- Approximately 70% of youth in Department of Juvenile Justice long-term facilities have a mental health diagnosis severe enough to require ongoing treatment.

Accessing Behavioral Health Services in Georgia

When looking at Georgia's counties:

- do not have a licensed psychologist*
- do not have a licensed social worker†
- do not have a licensed psychologist OR a licensed social worker†

* Counties without a licensed psychologist
† Counties without a licensed social worker
‡ Counties without both

The Role of Schools

Schools often serve as the primary point of access to behavioral health services and supports.

What We Have	What We Need
Social Workers [§] 1 for every 1,586 students	1 for every 250 students
School Psychologists [¶] 1 for every 2,137 students	1 for every 500 students
School Nurses 1 for every 919 students	1 for every 750 students

Voices www.georgiavoices.org 09/22

So, as families gear up for the new school year, it's crucial to prioritize mental health awareness and familiarize themselves with the resources available both within and outside their school. This toolkit is designed to help do just that!

FOR URGENT SUPPORT TEXT OR CALL 988, OR CALL THE GA CRISIS AND ACCESS LINE: 1-800-715-4225

FOR EVERYONE



We understand that the start of a new school year can be a hectic period for students, parents, and educators alike. Below are tools and resources to help you understand and manage your own stress during the back-to-school season.

CRISIS TEXT LINE |
Mental Health School Supplies Checklist

- Talk it up! **Connect and chat** with your kids or students feelings about going back to school, new teachers, building and maintaining friendships, fears, classes, and exciting opportunities.
- Set up **designated areas and organized spaces** in class and at home to foster routines and clarity.
- **Touch Base Again and Again** ☺
Connect about their day/week/semester:
 - What went well?
 - What didn't go so well?
 - What are they looking forward to the most for next week/month semester?
 - Are they feeling **overwhelmed, depressed or isolated**?
 - Try not to micromanage homework assignments/deadlines or overload them with busy work.
 - Communicate your availability and willingness to provide support if needed.
 - Encourage your kids or students to **tap into their hobbies**, try something new, or give back to the community.
 - **Have fun!** Enjoy some fun activities together, relax together, share funny memes or jokes.

■ **Set up clear routines:** Classroom, drop off, extracurricular activities, pick up time. This will help lessen stress, anxiety, and confusion.

■ Meet the teachers/parents to gain **clear direction and expectations**.

■ Together, discuss a clear list of expectations for the school year as well as rules and consequences in the classroom and at home. Having an open conversation provides kids a fair chance to **understand, internalize and give their opinion** on the expectations.

■ Make sure to have a clear and readily available list of **support resources and emergency contacts** for your students/children in case they need it.

■ Identify which special events or school activities are **important for your students/kids** and make an effort to share and show your excitement and make sure to be present.

■ Encourage setting up reminders and alarms to instill a sense of **responsibility, accountability, organization, and timeliness**.

■ Support and nurture your kids or students with **positive and encouraging words**.

Learn more at crisistextline.org/school

Need support?
Text **SCHOOL** to 741741

ACTION

This Mental Health School Supplies Checklist is designed to help you stay connected with your own well-being (or your child's) during this time of year.



FOR YOUTH



The shift from summer break to the school routine can be tough for many students. While some students thrive in the school environment – the learning, personal growth, stability of a routine, and forming connections – others may find it more challenging. Some students may encounter persistent bullying, feel the strain of academic demands, struggle with social interactions, among other issues. Continue reading for useful advice and strategies to help navigate through the school day.

ACTION

Crisis Text Line offers a robust webpage with resources and tips specifically for young people going back to school.

NEED TO VENT?

**Text HOME to 741741
to connect with a
volunteer Crisis
Counselor**

Free confidential 24/7
support at your fingertips.

Pass 741741 On To A Friend

You never know who might need a Crisis Text Line.

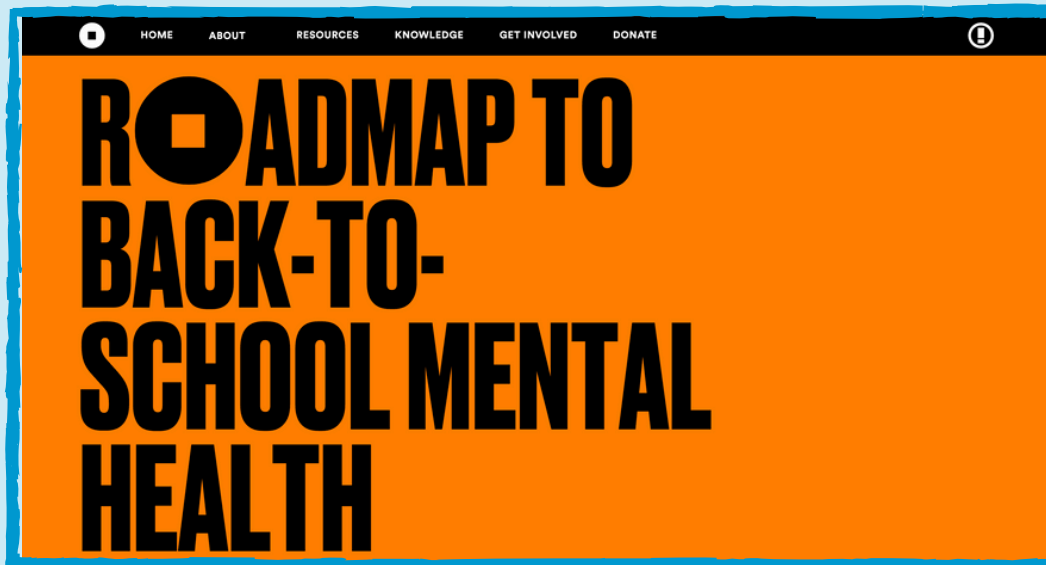
FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



While back-to-school season is an exciting and nerve-wracking time for students, it can also be a stressful time for parents. Being mindful about how to support mental health this time of year can go a long way to make the experience smoother for both kids and parents.

ACTION:

Dive into this comprehensive [Roadmap to Back-to-School Mental Health](#), full of tips for increasing well-being in both your child and yourself.



FOR EDUCATORS & PROFESSIONALS

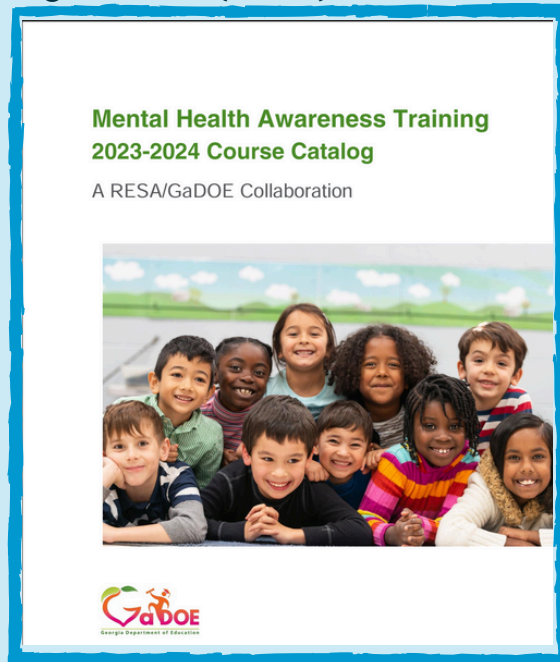


Launched in 2018, Georgia's Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) project aims to increase access to high-quality, evidence-informed mental health training for educators, school staff, community members, caregivers, and students. In partnership with the Georgia Department of Education, MHAT provides a selection of carefully chosen mental health trainings that can be scheduled in RESAs, districts, schools, and communities across the state. Topics include suicide prevention, general mental health awareness, trauma, educator wellness, and more. Courses range in duration and expertise level, allowing for easy scheduling based on the needs of the Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

ACTION

To view a catalog of current Mental Health Awareness Training courses, [click here](#).

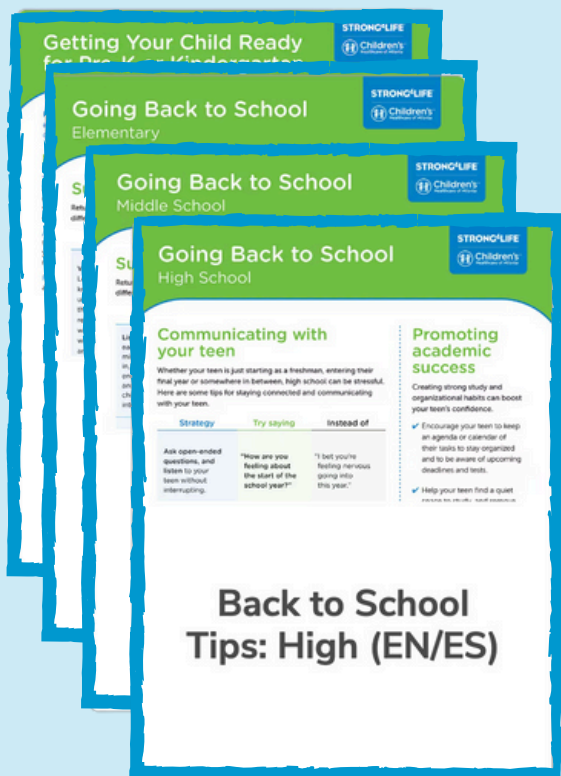
To request training for your school or community, [click here!](#)



BONUS RESOURCES



CHOA's Strong 4 Life (S4L) offers a variety of resources and articles that may provide insights, tools, and tips for navigating the back-to-school season for all ages and grade levels. Check out the resources below for additional information.

A photograph of two young women sitting on a wooden bench outdoors, smiling and talking to each other. One is wearing a plaid shirt, the other a green cardigan.

Preparing Kids to Go Back to School

Don't wait until the last minute to get ready for back to school. Instead, use the summer break to support your child's health and wellness and to prepare them for the year ahead.

CHOA

STRONG⁴LIFE

A photograph of three children standing on a grassy area in front of a school building. They are all wearing backpacks and appear to be talking.

Helping Kids Cope With Back-to-School Anxiety

Going back to school is always a transition, and it comes with lots of different emotions for kids. Learn things you can do to help ease your child's anxiety about the start of the school year.

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QUESTIONS? CONTACT

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