

Practice Alert



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Seasonal Affective Disorder

With the holiday season upon us, it is important to remember that this may be a difficult time for the youth and children we serve. They may be struggling with separation from family, strained familial relationships, or seasonal depression. As the days get shorter, it gets darker earlier, and the weather gets colder, a youth's mood and mental health status can be affected.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern and tends to affect teens and young adults, typically during winter. Symptoms of SAD include mood changes (feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable), sleep changes (having trouble sleeping or sleeping more than usual), energy changes (feeling tired or lacking energy), changes in appetite (eating less), social withdrawal (isolating oneself), and negative thinking.

We must remain vigilant to the signs of serious mental health concerns amongst our children and youth at every home visit. Communication is key to understanding how youth are feeling and what they are experiencing. Further, Caseworkers should have targeted conversations with the youth's caregiver so that they are also aware of what to watch for, steps to take if concerns are present, and where to get help and support for the youth.

Resources for youth struggling with Seasonal Affective Disorder or other forms of depression/anxiety include:

- **SAMHSA's free helpline**: Call 800-662-HELP (4357) for provider referrals in the area. Or text your zip code to 435748 (HELP4U).
- **The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ community**: Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678.
- **Crisis Text Line**: Text "HOME" to 741741.
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**: Call or text 988.

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