
Presidential Documents

Title 3—**Proclamation 7246 of October 30, 1999****The President****Child Mental Health Month, 1999****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

As a Nation, we have made much progress in ensuring the physical health of our young people. But we are only beginning to make similar strides in protecting their mental health. The symptoms of mental illness in children and adolescents too often go unrecognized and therefore untreated—a tragic failing that can lead to profound effects on their development. Even very young children can experience anxiety and depressive disorders that can have a long-term negative impact on their social interactions at home and at school.

Unfortunately, our attitudes regarding mental illness have compounded this problem. While we now know that more than one in five Americans experiences some form of mental illness each year, that many mental disorders are biological, and that they can be treated medically, too many people still believe that mental illness is a personal failure. Because of this widespread misconception, many parents are reluctant to acknowledge that their children need help, and many children who need help are afraid to ask for it.

During Child Mental Health Month, I encourage all parents, teachers, pediatricians, school nurses, other health care professionals, and concerned citizens across our country to learn more about children's mental health. By doing so, we can recognize more quickly the early warning signs of mental illnesses and disorders. We can detect depression before it deepens into serious illness, raise awareness of risk factors for suicide, and work to prevent more acts of youth violence.

We must do all we can to intervene in the lives of young people who are mentally or emotionally unstable before they cause harm to themselves or to others. I am pleased that some schools have responded to the recent youth violence tragedies by improving mental health services, expanding after-school and mentoring programs, and offering in-home counseling for vulnerable families. To ensure the success of these efforts, we must work to fight the stigma and dispel the myths that surround mental illness. By engaging in efforts that raise public awareness of our children's mental health, we can replace stigma with acceptance, ignorance with understanding, and fear with new hope for the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 1999 as Child Mental Health Month. I call upon families, schools, communities, and governments to dedicate themselves to promoting the mental health and well-being of all our children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William Clinton

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