



CHECKUP08

Mental Health Check-Ups for Young Americans

Protecting Our Future, Body and Mind

Over 21 million young people visited a healthcare professional last year, but only a small fraction were asked any questions about the number one contributor to poor life outcomes—their mental health. One in eight young people may have depression, and suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds. Yet, two-thirds of youth and young adults who have mental health problems do not get the help that they need. Increased access to mental health check-ups could lead to early diagnosis and treatment of these disorders and thus prevent worsening conditions or suicide.

Federal and state governments already play a pivotal role in a range of prevention efforts to protect the health of young Americans including child immunizations, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, and diabetes and nutrition education. The **CheckUp08** campaign was developed by Columbia University's TeenScreen Program and The Jed Foundation, and is supported by Active Minds, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA). **CheckUp08** is calling on elected officials and those running for federal and state offices to endorse the following principles to provide this same coverage for mental health check-ups and suicide prevention:

Principle 1: Federal and state governments should promote access to voluntary mental health check-ups for all Americans between the ages of 11 and 24.

Principle 2: Federal and state governments should support a national education effort to increase public awareness about mental health check-ups for young people and the impact of detecting mental disorders early.

Principle 3: Federal and state governments should work with healthcare providers and the insurance industry to ensure that mental health check-ups are integrated into routine healthcare for young people.

Principle 4: Young people receiving care and prevention services through federal and state-supported health programs should be offered mental health check-ups.

Principle 5: Appropriate federal and state agencies should initiate priority plans to expand mental health check-up programs to populations at elevated risk for suicide and impairment.

Principle 6: Federal and state governments should support ongoing evaluation and improvement of the efficacy and impact of mental health check-ups.



Bi-Partisan Support for Early Detection of Mental Health Problems

The importance of early detection in mental health, as outlined in the **CheckUp08** campaign principles, has already received significant bi-partisan support in the U.S. House and Senate as a means to promoting total wellness. Elected officials, such as Senators Gordon Smith and Pete Domenici, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, and Congressman Patrick Kennedy, have long encouraged their colleagues to back mental health and suicide prevention initiatives for young Americans, including early detection.

Senator Smith (R-OR) has been a strong advocate for mental health check-ups since the loss of his son in 2003 and was instrumental in passing the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act for suicide prevention among young people. On the importance of mental health check-ups, he says:

Mental illness doesn't care if you're rich or poor, from a loving family or a broken home. The only thing that matters is diagnosing the problem early and getting treatment to those who need it in time to make a difference.

Congresswoman DeLauro (D-CT) reiterates the importance of access to both medical and mental health check-ups as a public health imperative:

We've accepted that it is good public health policy to make sure every child is vaccinated. Now we must do the same and make sure every child receives a mental health check-up. That's also good public health policy.

The **CheckUp08** campaign is calling on elected officials and those running for federal and state offices to endorse these principles on behalf of America's young people. Through broad based, bi-partisan support, the **CheckUp08** campaign will maintain strong partnerships with existing supporters in Washington and leverage new allies in advocating for mental health check-ups and suicide prevention. By engaging elected officials, political candidates, youth advocates, and the medical community, **CheckUp08** will improve access to mental health check-ups and secure a promising future for young Americans.

The CheckUp08 campaign is a mental health initiative focused on young people and was developed by Columbia University's TeenScreen Program and The Jed Foundation. It is also supported by Active Minds, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA).



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