

## **Signs of childhood mental disorders**

Many signs of childhood mental disorders mirror typical childhood behaviors, experts say. But if certain actions become more frequent, sustained or disruptive, they can signal a more serious problem. Signs to look for include:

- Difficulty communicating, concentrating or focusing on tasks
- Repetitious behaviors, such as rocking back and forth or head banging
- Having a limited range of interests or activities, or losing interest in play activities, school or loved ones
- Becoming upset by small changes in their environment or daily routine
- Crying, feeling sad, hopeless, negative or worthless
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns, and vague physical complaints
- Talking nonstop, sleeping little, showing unusually poor judgment
- Unrealistic and overwhelming fears, and excessive worry
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability or outbursts of anger, or severe mood swings
- Substance abuse or other anti-social behavior
- Family history of mental illness
- Traumatic event such as death of a loved one, abuse or neglect

**Compiled with information from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Mental Help Net and Mental Health Source.**

## **Web sites**

- Mental Health Association in Michigan: [www.mha-mi.org](http://www.mha-mi.org)
- National Mental Health Information Center: [www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org)
- National Mental Health Association: [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)
- The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law: [www.bazelon.org](http://www.bazelon.org)
- The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health: [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)