

# Mental Health Checkups Increase Early Detection and Can Save Lives

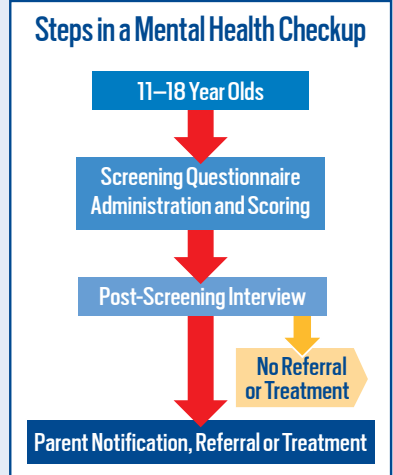
Mental health checkups or screenings are especially valuable because many mental health problems are difficult to detect. The U.S. Surgeon General reports that 11 percent of our nation's youth suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder that causes significant impairment. However, only 30 percent of these youth are identified and receive mental health services.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that most teens who receive a mental health checkup are fine or only experiencing typical teenage problems that do not require further assessment. For some, however, checkups can help detect early signs of mental illness, enabling teens and their families to promptly access professional services that can improve their prognosis for recovery and, in some cases, save their lives.

## Checkups Are...

**Quick and Easy.** Utilizing a brief, evidence-based questionnaire that takes 5–10 minutes to complete, teens are asked about symptoms of depression, anxiety and substance abuse, as well as about suicidal thinking and behavior. The questionnaire can be easily administered in a doctor's office, at school, and in other youth-based settings.

**Effective.** A recent report from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force concluded that primary care screening tools accurately



identify depressed adolescents.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, research shows that TeenScreen is effective in identifying young people who are at risk for depression, other mental disorders and suicide.<sup>3</sup>

**Safe.** Research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has shown that screening and directly asking youth if they are thinking about suicide or have made a prior suicide attempt does not cause them to start thinking about suicide or increase or create distress.<sup>4</sup>

## Support for Screening and TeenScreen

The importance of early detection of mental illness through screening is well documented in published medical research and is endorsed by government health authorities.



Forty leading medical professional, national health, mental health and education organizations all recommend routine screening with a validated questionnaire to identify youth who may be suffering from depression or another mental health problem.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends annual depression screening by primary care providers for all 12-18 year-olds.

The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council issued a report in 2009 calling for evidence-based screening of adolescents for mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. The report highlights primary care, school, and community settings as key locations for screening and states that checkups offer the potential to prevent fully developed disorders.

The U.S. Surgeon General issued a mental health report in 1999 that endorsed early identification of mental illness through screening. In 2003, the President's Commission on Mental Health also endorsed screening citing TeenScreen as a model program.

The foremost medical professional groups also support regular mental health checkups. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends annual screening and referral for mental health problems for adolescents. The Society for Adolescent Medicine supports the early identification of mental illness as a critical standard of care. The American Academy of Family Physicians has issued an official endorsement for the USPSTF recommendations for adolescent depression screening.

TeenScreen is included in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices and is included in the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention.

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The TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups is an affiliate of the Columbia University Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.

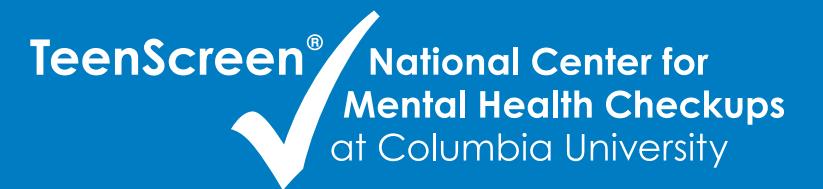
The National Center for Mental Health Checkups and its two national programs, TeenScreen Primary Care and TeenScreen Schools and Communities, are supported by foundations, individuals, and organizations committed to early identification of mental illness in youth and prevention of teen suicide. The National Center and its programs and initiatives are not affiliated with or funded by any pharmaceutical companies.



1. Merikangas KR, et al., (2011). Service utilization for lifetime mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: results of the National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 50(1):32-45.



# Making Adolescent Mental Health Checkups a National Priority



# TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups

The TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups at Columbia University is a non-profit privately funded public health initiative whose aim is to increase youth access to regular mental health checkups and improve the early identification of mental illness.

TeenScreen Primary Care is designed to assist health care professionals with integrating mental health checkups into routine health care for adolescent patients.

TeenScreen Schools and Communities is the National Center's pioneer program, offering mental health checkups to youth at schools and other youth-serving community nationwide.

The National Center serves as a resource and ally for advocates and partners from the public and private sectors, non-profits and academic institutions.



## Our Mission

Expand and improve the early detection of mental illness in youth.

## Our Goal

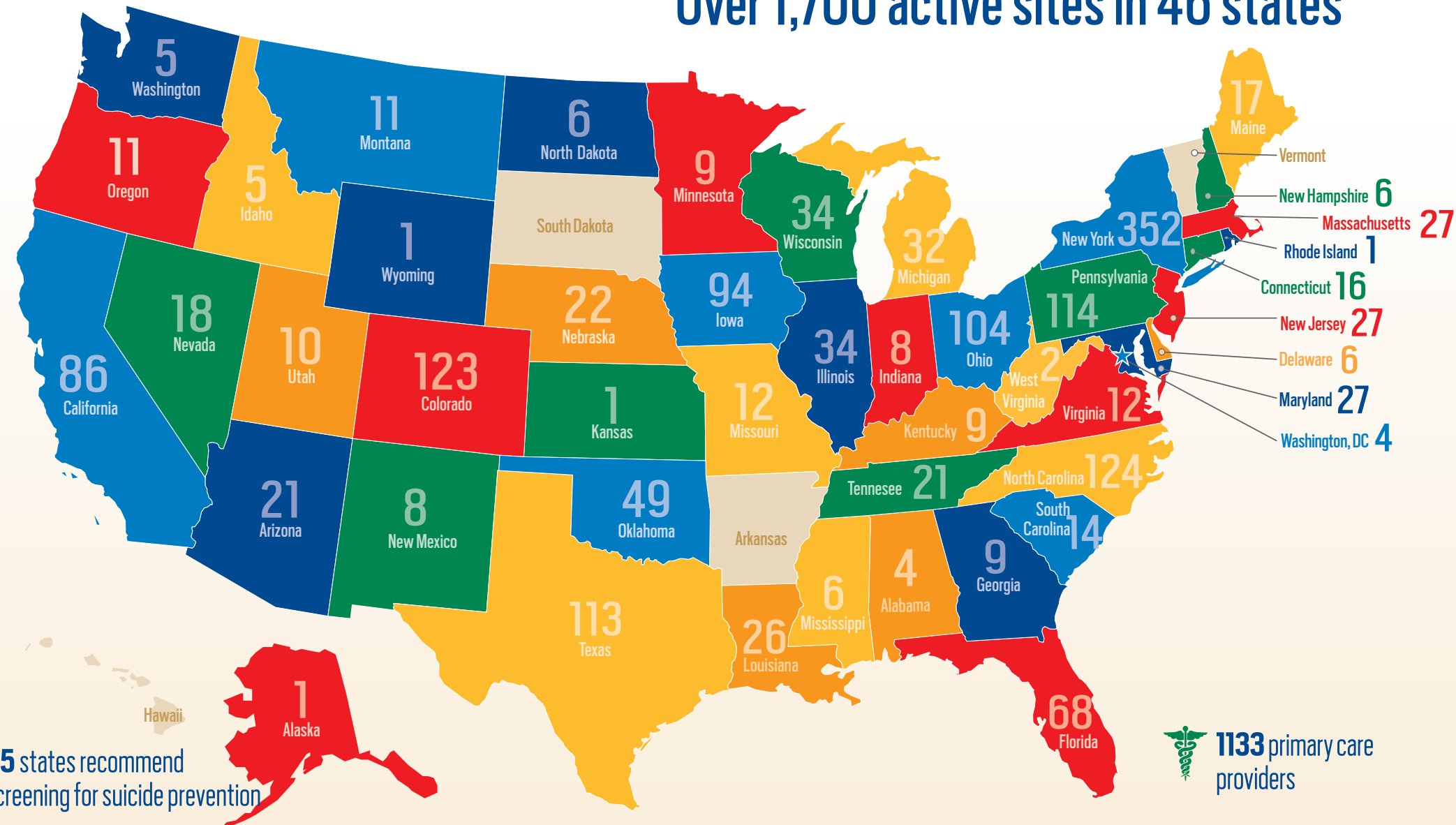
To mainstream annual mental health checkups as a routine procedure for adolescents in health care, school and other youth-serving community settings.

## Our Actions

### The National Center:

- **Advocates:** advances policies aimed at expanded availability and utilization of mental health checkups.
- **Screens:** promotes the use of evidence-based mental health checkups to detect mental disorders early, prevent adolescent suicide and reduce disability.
- **Educates:** provides information to raise awareness about youth mental health and suicide prevention.

Over 1,700 active sites in 46 states



35 states recommend screening for suicide prevention

40 national organizations support voluntary youth mental health screening

 1133 primary care providers

 587 school and community-based sites

as of February 2011

## TeenScreen<sup>®</sup> Primary Care

TeenScreen Primary Care provides free evidence-based screening tools to medical providers to help them determine if their adolescent patients are suffering from depression, anxiety or other conditions and ascertain if they are at risk for suicide.

TeenScreen's mental health checkup is designed for 11-to-18 year olds and involves a simple screening procedure using a brief questionnaire. It can be administered by a nurse or medical

technician in the exam room or waiting room. This evaluation is typically incorporated into well-child exams, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) exams, sports physicals or other routine office visits.

TeenScreen is collaborating with managed care leaders and health care systems to provide mental health checkups at routine adolescent visits nationwide.

### Our partners include:

- Kaiser Permanente
- EmblemHealth
- ValueOptions
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- National Association of Community Health Centers
- Independent Primary Care Providers

## TeenScreen<sup>®</sup> Schools and Communities

TeenScreen Schools and Communities is committed to making the mental health and well-being of America's youth a national priority and to ensuring that every parent is offered the opportunity to have their teenager receive a voluntary mental health checkup.

The program uses a questionnaire and interview process to determine if a teenager may be at risk for depression, other mental disorders or suicide. The screening does not involve diagnosis. It is a first step to determine if further evaluation is needed. Parents of youth

found to be at possible risk are notified and helped with identifying and connecting to local services where they can obtain a complete evaluation by a professional. Treatment decisions, if any, are always left to parents.