Key Messages

* The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exact a huge toll on both the physical health and the mental health of the nation’s young people.
* Beginning a new school year usually comes with some anxiety, but this year students may need a lot more support, reassurance, and comforting before they’re ready to learn.
* A lot of kids and teens haven’t been able to feel safe or stable over the last year because of the trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways it has disrupted “normal” life.
* As we enter a new, very uncertain academic school year, it’s important for parents, caregivers, and school personnel to know the signs that a young person is struggling with their mental health.
* Feeling safe is important. After meeting basic needs for survival like food, water, and sleep, feeling safe and secure is necessary before anyone can focus on relationships, learning, or other opportunities for personal success.
* Being physically back in school for the 2021-2022 school year may help some students feel more secure, but for others the anxiety and fear is palpable and overwhelming. But no one has to suffer in silence.
* Parents, caregivers, and school personnel should check in on their own mental well-being during these stressful times.
* One of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take an anonymous screen at www.mhascreening.org.
* MHA has 10 online screening tools, including one that is youth-focused and one for parents. Once you get the results, MHA will provide you with more information and help you to figure out next steps.

Facts and Stats

* The percentage of youth screeners (ages 11-17 ) at mhascreening.org who identify as trauma survivors has consistently risen since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Rates of depression among youth screeners at mhascreening.org remain higher than pre-pandemic levels.
* The number of youth screeners who report frequent suicidal ideation is higher than ever, with over half (54%) indicating they had frequent thoughts that they would be better off dead or of hurting themselves as recently as June 2021.
* When asked about the main contributors to their mental health problems in 2021, 36% of youth screeners cited past trauma as a factor.