



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S

MENTAL HEALTH THIS SCHOOL YEAR

A practical family guide for connection, coping, bullying concerns, and finding help.

A supportive adult can make a meaningful difference.

You do not need perfect words or all the answers. Consistent check-ins, calm listening, and knowing when to bring in additional support can help a young person feel safer and less alone.

MAKE CHECK-INS PART OF THE ROUTINE

Small, regular conversations often feel safer than waiting for a serious problem to appear. Try questions that invite more than a yes or no answer.

- What felt good about today?
- What was the hardest part of your day?
- Who made you feel included or supported?
- Is anything happening at school or online that is making things harder?
- Do you want me to listen, help you problem-solve, or help you involve another adult?

WHAT SUPPORTIVE LISTENING SOUNDS LIKE

- “I’m glad you told me.”
- “I believe you.”
- “That sounds really hard.”
- “We can figure out the next step together.”
- “You do not have to handle this alone.”

Try this before giving advice

Ask: “Would it help most if I listen, help you think through options, or help you get more support?”

NOTICE CHANGES, NOT JUST BAD DAYS

Any one sign can have many explanations. Pay attention to patterns, intensity, persistence, and whether changes are interfering with daily life.

- Withdrawing from friends, family, teams, or activities they usually enjoy
- Frequent school avoidance, unexplained aches, or repeated requests to stay home
- Major changes in sleep, appetite, energy, or concentration
- Persistent sadness, irritability, fear, anxiety, or feeling overwhelmed
- Sudden distress related to a phone, social media, group chats, gaming, or online activity
- Statements about hopelessness, being a burden, self-harm, or not wanting to be here

BUILD A COPING MENU TOGETHER

Help your child identify several things that make hard moments more manageable. A coping menu can include:

- A trusted adult they can contact at school and outside school
- A predictable sleep and morning routine
- Movement, music, art, journaling, sports, pets, or time outdoors
- Breathing or grounding exercises
- Intentional breaks from stressful social media or group chats



IF BULLYING OR CYBERBULLYING IS PART OF THE PROBLEM

The goal is safety, support, documentation, and a clear path forward.

- 1. Listen first.** Thank your child for telling you. Avoid blaming, minimizing, or immediately confronting the other student or family.
- 2. Save the details.** Keep dates, screenshots, usernames, messages, witness names, and a brief timeline. Preserve online evidence before blocking or reporting accounts.
- 3. Ask what feels safe.** Keep your child involved in the plan when possible. Ask what they are most worried about and what would help them feel safer.
- 4. Report through the school.** For Carroll County Public Schools, families can use the online Bullying Reporting System or contact the school administrator, counselor, or another trusted staff member.
- 5. Follow up in writing.** Keep a record of reports, meetings, agreed next steps, and changes in the situation. Ask when and how the school will follow up.
- 6. Escalate urgent safety concerns.** Threats, stalking, physical danger, sexual exploitation, or immediate safety risks may require law enforcement, emergency services, or other specialized help.

CCPS bullying reporting

Carroll County Public Schools provides an Online Bullying Reporting System and printable reporting forms. Visit carrollk12.org/student-services/incident-reporting.

WHEN TO CONNECT WITH PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

- Distress is persistent, worsening, or interfering with school, sleep, relationships, or everyday functioning.
- Your child asks for professional help, says they cannot manage what they are feeling, or has a major change in behavior.
- Self-harm, suicidal thinking, severe hopelessness, substance use, or an immediate safety concern is present.

Support yourself too

Caregivers need support too. Share the load when you can, protect small pockets of rest, and reach out for your own help when needed.

LOCAL AND IMMEDIATE SUPPORT

IMMEDIATE DANGER: CALL 911

For suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, or a mental health crisis, call or text 988. Available 24/7.

Carroll County Health Department

Behavioral health service coordination: 410-876-4449

Carroll County Youth Service Bureau (CCYSB)

Request help/referral: 410-848-2500, option 1 | ccysb.org

Bee a Rae of Sunshine Foundation

Resources and community support:
www.braeofsunshinefoundation.com

Remember

Every young person deserves to feel safe, supported, heard, and valued. Asking for help is a strength.



WHEN SCHOOL FEELS HEAVY

A quick support sheet for students

Keep this page somewhere easy to find. You do not have to wait until things feel like a crisis to ask for help.

1. NAME WHAT IS HAPPENING

Try finishing one sentence:

- “The hardest part right now is...”
- “I feel most stressed when...”
- “I wish an adult understood...”
- “Something online that is bothering me is...”

2. CHOOSE ONE PERSON TO TELL

A parent, caregiver, counselor, teacher, coach, relative, friend’s parent, therapist, or another trusted adult can help you carry the next step.

If talking feels hard

You can text, write a note, show a screenshot, or start with: “I need you to take this seriously. I’m having a hard time.”

3. IF BULLYING IS HAPPENING

- Save screenshots, messages, dates, names, and what happened.
- Tell a trusted adult at home and at school.
- Do not retaliate or post something you may regret later.
- If you are afraid for your safety, say that clearly.

4. USE A 10-MINUTE RESET

- Put your phone down or step away from the stressful chat.
- Take 10 slow breaths, making the exhale longer than the inhale.
- Drink water and eat something if you have not eaten.
- Walk, stretch, shower, listen to music, sit with a pet, or go outside.
- Write down the next small thing you can control.

5. MAKE A SHORT SAFETY LIST

Fill this in before you need it:

Adult I can tell: _____

Person at school I trust: _____

Friend who helps me feel grounded: _____

Place where I feel safest: _____

Thing that usually helps me reset: _____

IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT HURTING YOURSELF OR YOU DO NOT FEEL SAFE

Tell an adult now. Call or text 988 for 24/7 crisis support. If there is immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

You are capable. You are enough. You are worthy of support.

Kindness Matters. Be a Rae of Sunshine.

Educational resource note: General educational information only. Not a substitute for medical or mental health care. Informed by public guidance from The Steve Fund, CCPS, Carroll County Health Department, CCYSB, and 988. Contact information verified August 2026.

Kindness Matters. Be a Rae of Sunshine. | www.braeofsunshinefoundation.com

A nonprofit fund of the Community Foundation of Carroll County.