

Behavioral Health Diagnosis Definitions

Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as "one of the most common health disorders, affecting approximately 5 to 10% of children in the United States. Studies show that ADHD may affect certain areas of the brain that allow us to solve problems, plan ahead, understand others' actions, and control our impulses.

Autism is a condition which is usually diagnosed before a child is three. Autistic children have delayed speech or no speech at all, problems interacting socially, limited interests and odd or repetitive behaviors. Autism is a neurodevelopment disorder caused by abnormal brain development and functioning.

Asperger's Disorder is a disorder which is characterized by problems in development of social skills and behavior. Most children with Asperger's Disorder have difficulty interacting with their peers.

Children with **Bipolar Disorder** have manic and/or depressive symptoms. Highs may alternate with lows. Behavior will have severe changes- unusually happy or silly, or very irritable, angry, agitated or aggressive. The diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder in children and teens is complex and involves careful observation over an extended period of time.

Conduct Disorder refers to a group of behavioral and emotional problems in youngsters. Children and adolescents with this disorder have great difficulty following rules and behaving in a socially acceptable way. They are often as "bad" or delinquent. Many factors may contribute to a child developing conduct disorder, including brain damage, child abuse, genetic vulnerability, school failure, and traumatic life experiences.

Depression is defined as an illness when the feelings of depression persist and interfere with a child or adolescent's ability to function. Children under stress, who experience loss, or who have attention, learning, conduct or anxiety disorders are at a higher risk for depression.

Children with **Eating Disorders** are intensely afraid of gaining weight and do not believe that they are underweight may have eating disorders. Eating disorders can be life threatening. Young people with anorexia nervosa, for example, have difficulty maintaining a minimum healthy body weight. Youngsters with bulimia nervosa feel compelled to binge (eat huge amounts of food in one sitting). After a binge, in order to prevent weight gain, they rid their bodies of the food by vomiting, abusing laxatives, taking enemas, or exercising obsessively.

Learning Disorders that make it harder for children and adolescents to receive or express information could be a sign of learning disorders. Learning disorders can show up as problems with spoken and written language, coordination, attention, or self-control.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder - OCD is characterized by recurrent intense obsessions and/or compulsions that cause severe discomfort and interfere with day-to-day functioning. Obsessions are recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are unwanted and cause marked anxiety or distress. Compulsions are repetitive behaviors or rituals (like hand washing, hoarding, keeping things in order, checking something over and over) or mental acts (like counting, repeating words silently, avoiding). In OCD, the obsessions or compulsions cause significant anxiety or distress, or they interfere with the child's normal routine, academic functioning, social activities, or relationships.

In children with **Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)**, there is an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that seriously interferes with the youngster's day to day functioning.

A child who experiences a catastrophic event may develop ongoing difficulties known as **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. The stressful or traumatic event involves a situation where someone's life has been threatened or severe injury has occurred (ex. they may be the victim or a witness of physical abuse, sexual abuse, violence in the home or in the community, automobile accidents, natural disasters.) A child's risk of developing PTSD is related to the seriousness of the trauma, whether the trauma is repeated, the child's proximity to the trauma, and his/her relationship to the victim(s).

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is a complex psychiatric illness that can affect young children. It is characterized by serious problems in emotional attachments to others

Schizophrenia is a serious psychiatric illness that causes strange thinking, strange feelings, and unusual behavior. It is uncommon in children and is hard to recognize in its early phases. Early diagnosis and medical treatment are important. Schizophrenia is a life-long disease that can be controlled but not cured.

Children with **Tourette's Disorder** have both body and vocal tics (throat clearing). They cannot control these sounds and movements and should not be blamed for them. Some tics disappear by early adulthood, and some continue. They may act impulsively, and/or develop obsessions and compulsions. Sometimes people with Tourette's Disorder may blurt out obscene words, insult others, or make obscene gestures or movements.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry