

## Mental Health and Crisis Management Services

### Information for Parents about Eating Disorders

#### Did you know?

- The holiday season is a fun time of the year for millions of children throughout the world. Festivities, gathering with family and friends and celebrating often includes increased pressure to indulge in holiday meals and treats.
- For individuals suffering from eating disorders, this can be an extremely difficult time.
- The most common eating disorders, Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia, affect more than 24 million Americans each year, according to The Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness.

#### What is an eating disorder?

- Eating disorders -- such as Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating Disorder -- include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. Eating disorders are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.

#### Signs and Symptoms

##### Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.

- Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for height, body type, age, and activity level
- Intense fear of weight gain or being "fat"
- Feeling "fat" or overweight despite dramatic weight loss
- Loss of menstrual periods in females
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

##### Bulimia

Bulimia includes eating large amounts of food (binging) -- more than most people would eat in one meal--in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food and calories through vomiting, laxative abuse, or over-exercising (purging).

- Repeated episodes of bingeing and purging
- Feeling out of control during a binge and eating beyond the point of comfortable fullness
- Purging after a binge, (typically by self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, or fasting)
- Frequent dieting
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

#### Compulsive Eating

Compulsive eating is characterized primarily by periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling comfortably full.

- May be sporadic fasts or repetitive diets and often feelings of shame or self-hatred after a binge.
- May struggle with anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which can contribute to their unhealthy episodes of binge eating. Body weight may vary from normal to mild, moderate, or severe obesity.

#### Get Help

- If you suspect your child is suffering from an eating disorder, seek treatment immediately. The goal of intervention is to help children develop a healthy outlook about themselves and a positive attitude about food.
- Set a healthy example by serving a variety of nutritious foods and discuss the importance of a balanced diet. Exercise should be encouraged as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- See your family doctor for medical advice and or resources.
- Visit your school counseling professionals for resources in the community.
- Many times individual, group, and family counseling services are found to be very helpful.

Information adapted from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/nedaDir/files/documents/handouts/WhatIsEd.pdf> and <http://www.uclahealth.org/workfiles/documents/healthtips/ht0508.pdf>.

**M-DCPS wishes you and your family a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season!!!!**

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M-DCPS Crisis Hotline: 305-995-CARE

<http://mhcms.dadeschools.net/>