

SUMMER 2014

Princeton House Behavioral Health

Summer is an Ideal Time to
Resolve Behavioral Health Issues



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**Princeton House
Behavioral Health**
Princeton HealthCare System

Helping Children and Adolescents Return to School



School's out for most students. Steps taken during the summer can often help children and adolescents transition back to school in September and reduce the risk of school refusal and its complications.

School refusal is complex, yet fairly common, affecting up to 28 percent of children and teenagers. The disorder is characterized by a child refusing to attend school on a regular basis or having problems staying in school. School refusal can be linked to anxiety disorders, depression, undiagnosed learning disabilities, and substance abuse.



“One of the most important actions parents can take during the summer is to keep their children and teenagers on a regular sleep, activity, and treatment schedule,” says Rebecca Meinke, MD, a Princeton House Behavioral Health child and adolescent psychiatrist. “It is also important to discuss with your child any school-related stresses *before* the start of school, such as riding the bus for the first time, going to a new school, or fear of bullying. Do not project your own anxieties, because the child may pick up on the idea that school is not a safe place.”

School refusal may also be related to family stresses. These include moving to a new home, marriage and divorce, parental military deployment, and the death of a relative or beloved pet. Common symptoms of school refusal include

headaches, stomach aches, nausea, diarrhea, defiance and tantrums, crying, insomnia, and ignoring school work.

“Sometimes it is obvious that the physical symptoms are directly caused by anxiety, but often we have to rule out any medical concerns with referrals to pediatricians or family physicians,” says Dr. Meinke.

Clinicians at PHBH provide comprehensive treatment services that integrate behavioral therapy, development of coping skills, medication, tutoring, and communication with parents and school officials. Full-day and intensive half-day programs are available throughout the summer and year-round (see sidebar). PHBH professionals also work closely with school personnel to develop Individualized Education Plans if special school services are required.

Summer Treatment Options for Children and Teens

Princeton House Behavioral Health's specialized summer programs for children and adolescents help kids maintain a sense of structure, socialize with their peers, and continue to work on anxiety and coping skills while school is out.

“Behavioral health needs are a year-round endeavor,” notes Chirayu Parikh, DO, Associate Medical Director of Child and Adolescent Programs at PHBH's North Brunswick site. “We work closely with schools, camps, and day care providers to keep children and teens motivated throughout the summer.”

Full-day partial hospital programs and half-day intensive outpatient programs are available at PHBH's sites in Princeton, Hamilton, North Brunswick, and Moorestown.

To learn more, visit www.princetonhouse.org.
To make a referral, call 888.437.1610.

Medication Safety in the Summer



Changes in daily routines, sleeping late, too much time in the sun, inadequate hydration, and skipped meals. All of these can lead to problems with medication dosages and schedules when children and adolescents are not attending school or an outpatient program.

Depending on the medication used and some tweaks to a youngster's routine, children and adolescents can stay healthy and safe during the summer, says child and adolescent psychiatrist Madhurani Khare, MD, Medical Director of Princeton House Behavioral Health's Hamilton site.

"With most medications, the child or teen can take them as soon as he or she wakes up and can adjust the schedule throughout the day," she says. "If the child goes to a child care center, babysitter, or camp, the nurse or caregiver must adhere to the child's medication plan."

But what about a teen who is home alone and sleeping in while parents work during the summer?

A first dose or five-day pillbox can be set up near the teen's bed, never a full bottle, cautions Dr. Khare. A cell phone alarm or text reminder can keep the teen on schedule. All other medications should be locked up while adults are not home.

Depending on each child's individual health and physician approval, it may be safe for parents to allow a child who

takes medication for ADHD to take a summer break from the medication. These medications can usually be restarted safely about one week prior to the beginning of school.

However, medications for depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorders should never be stopped suddenly during the summer, cautions Dr. Khare. "Stopping these can lead to an increase in anxiety or depression."

Sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats, and limited sun time are a must for children and teens who take psychotropic and antipsychotic medication due to the risk of photosensitivity. Proper hydration with water and electrolyte fluids is essential to avoid the potential for toxic dehydration in those who take lithium or certain other medications.

Most children and adolescent patients visit their psychiatrists or other providers for regular medication monitoring during the summer, says Dr. Khare. PHBH's Child and Adolescent Partial Hospital Program and Intensive Outpatient Program run all year-round at sites in Princeton, Hamilton, North Brunswick, and Moorestown for those requiring structured treatment for substance abuse, psychiatric issues, and co-occurring disorders.

**For more information, visit princetonhouse.org.
To make a referral, call 888.437.1610.**

Emotion Regulation in the Summer

Princeton House Behavioral Health's Supporting Adolescent Girls Emotionally (SAGE) program helps girls ages 13 to 18 identify and understand their emotional struggles and impulsive behaviors as they build confidence and develop positive coping skills.

During the summer, it is important to create day-to-day structure for teenage girls that helps them to regulate their emotions and avoid impulsive behaviors, says Monisha Motiwala, PsyD, Team Coordinator for SAGE.

She advises sticking with a regular sleep and meal schedule, getting out and engaging in enjoyable activities, finding a part-time job, or learning to drive. Girls who are struggling with body image issues or an eating disorder should talk about it with a trusted therapist. When a teenage girl takes care of herself, it reduces her vulnerability to negative emotions, irritability, and mood swings.

As summer wanes, SAGE helps girls develop a "cope-ahead" plan to manage stress and anxiety as back-to-school approaches.

"Our goal is to assist girls in creating a life worth living, whether that includes college, a career, a new job, or family life," says Dr. Motiwala.

SAGE offers a full-day, year-round Partial Hospital Program five days per week and an Intensive Outpatient Program three days per week on PHBH's Princeton campus.

**For more information, visit www.princetonhouse.org.
To make a referral, call 888.437.1610.**



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Princeton House Launches Young Adult Inpatient Program



Princenton House Behavioral Health (PHBH) recently expanded its Young Adult Program by adding an inpatient program that provides intensive, short-term medical detoxification and addiction treatment for men and women ages 18 through mid-20s.

Located at 905 Herrontown Road in Princeton, the Young Adult inpatient program also treats individuals with co-occurring addiction and mental health issues.

One of only a handful of programs in New Jersey to provide medical detox and inpatient addiction recovery services specifically for young adults, PHBH's Young Adult inpatient program replaces its inpatient Adolescent Substance Abuse Program.

Chris Losch, LCSW, LCADC, Director of Addiction Services, points out that the transition from an inpatient program for adolescents to one that serves young adults is substantiated by data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Young adults are at the epicenter of a national opiate addiction epidemic, and they represent Princeton House's fastest-growing patient population. Many are self-medicating to fight depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues, he says.

"In 2014, there are more young adults than ever before living at home and dependent on their parents, struggling to hold a job, stay in college, or form lasting relationships," he says. "Many of them have trouble with life transitions and have not learned how to function independently."

Treatment modalities include:

group therapy featuring coping/life skills training and creative arts therapy

individual sessions

individual family and multi-family educational groups

medication monitoring by psychiatrists, advanced practice nurses, and RNs

referrals for post-hospitalization treatment and continuing care

The new inpatient program features a curriculum that focuses on age-appropriate topics, personal assessments, and groups specializing in topics such as school, work, relationships, substance abuse, and other issues facing young adults. Young adults fare better in treatment among their peers because their common life experiences and stressors are significantly different from those of adults outside their age group.

The new inpatient program is part of a continuum of treatment for young adults that includes partial hospital and intensive outpatient programs at

PHBH's outpatient centers in Princeton, Hamilton, North Brunswick, and Moorestown.

For more information, visit www.princetonhouse.org. To make a referral, call 800.242.2550 for inpatient admissions or 888.437.1610 for outpatient admissions.