

## Supporting Youth Behavioral Health: Quick Guide for Primary Care Providers

Primary care often identifies behavioral health needs before anyone else. Early screening and timely referrals lead to better outcomes and help prevent crises before they occur. Use this guide to: Spot concerns early, connect families to the right supports, and partner with SilverSummit when needs are more complex.

### Common Screening Tools

Common evidence-based tools, such as the PHQ-9, PHQ-A, GAD-7, PSC-17, Vanderbilt, and various trauma screeners help identify behavioral health concerns in children and adolescents. You can access these tools anytime on our website at [SilverSummitHealthPlan.com](https://SilverSummitHealthPlan.com).



### Interpreting a “Positive” Screen

A screen is considered positive when any of the following occurs:

- > Scores fall in the **moderate or severe range** on validated tools (PHQ A, GAD 7, PSC 17).
- > Symptoms are causing impairment at **home, school, or with peers**, even if the score looks mild.
- > **Caregivers or the youth** express concern that behaviors are worsening or creating daily challenges.
- > Behaviors are outside **developmental expectations**

**A positive screen indicates the need for further clinical assessment and follow up, not a diagnosis.**

### What To Do After a Positive Screen



#### Normalize, Validate and Start the Conversation

Use supportive language and reduce stigma by normalizing supportive services.

“These concerns are common, and help is available.”



#### Assess Safety

Suicidal ideation, self-harm, or acute behavioral risk need urgent intervention. If any concern is present, contact crisis services immediately.



#### Assess Functional Impact

Document how symptoms affect: school attendance, family stress, peer/social interactions, and past crises or service involvement.



#### Use the Severity Guide

Choose the Pathway that best aligns with stated symptoms.

### Understanding Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)

SED refers to youth with a diagnosable behavioral health condition and significant functional impairment in home, school, or community functioning. Common conditions include depression, anxiety, severe ADHD, trauma-related disorders, autism with behavioral impact, bipolar disorder, and co-occurring substance use.

# SEVERITY GUIDE

Concerns	Presentation	Action
Mild	Symptoms present but not impairing daily function Mild distractibility, occasional sadness, age-expected tantrums	Monitor & Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor</li><li>• Provide brief interventions</li><li>• Psychoeducation</li></ul>
Moderate	Symptoms are more frequent and interfering with daily routines Anxiety impacting school, outbursts 1-2x/week, academic decline	Outpatient therapy referral Consider psychiatry Care coordination if barriers to care exist
Significant (Possible SED)	Clear functional impairment across settings Aggression, property destruction, self-Harm, school refusal Multi-system involvement (school, CPS, juvenile justice)	Refer to SilverSummit for assessment/wraparound Contact crisis if safety concerns are present

## Distinguishing Developmental vs Clinical Behaviors

### Developmentally Expected

- > Tantrums in toddlers/preschoolers that are short, resolve with redirection, and do not involve aggression
- > Occasional mood swings in adolescents
- > Normal distractibility depending on age and context

### Behaviors are more likely clinically meaningful when they are:

- > Persistent
- > Intense
- > Not improving
- > Causing impairment
- > Unsafe

### For example:

- > Daily tantrums with aggression, property destruction, or self-harm
- > Aggression toward peers/family
- > Decline in school functioning or withdrawal from activities



### Health Plan Support & Resources

If you identify a youth with significant behavioral health needs or are unsure how to connect a family to services, SilverSummit can help.

- Phone: 844-366-2880
- Secure Email: [SilverSummit\\_Carecoordination@centene.com](mailto:SilverSummit_Carecoordination@centene.com)
- See the Children's Health & Wellness - [SilverSummitHealthplan.com](https://SilverSummitHealthplan.com)
- Pediatric Psychiatric Consult Line (Nevada PAL) 702-553-4523
- Children's Mobile Crisis Response Team (Know Crisis)

Southern & Rural Nevada 702-486-7865  
Northern Nevada 775-688-1670

### Provider Resources

- [SAMHSA Treatment Considerations for Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) Pediatric mental and behavioral health screening and follow-up guidance.](#)
- [Nevada Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Workgroup](#)

### Community Resources

- NAMI Nevada support for mental health - [NAMINevada.org](https://NAMINevada.org)
- Youth Wraparound Services - [Magellan of Nevada](#)

