

Wellness Screen Program: FAQs for Parents

What is Connected Community Wellness Screen Program?

The Wellness Screen is an emotional wellness screening program for youth. The goal of the Wellness Screen is to make voluntary emotional wellness screening available to all adolescents in the region: KMC is assisting Slinger School District with the opportunity to have this service available in schools. The Wellness Screen looks for the risk factors that are associated with mental health issues like depression, but does not make a diagnosis. Parents of youth that are found through the screening to have potential emotional wellness risks are notified and helped with identifying and connecting to local mental health resources where they can obtain a complete evaluation by a qualified healthcare professional. The Wellness Screen does not involve treatment and does not recommend nor endorse specific treatment for the youth who are identified by the screening process.

What are the benefits of screening adolescents?

The main benefit of screening is finding youth who are struggling and unsure what to do next. The Wellness Screen's strength is in identifying these youth, alerting their parents to their struggles, and giving them a chance to get help before problems become severe and, for some, life-threatening.

Why offer screening in schools? What does mental health have to do with learning?

Just like vision and hearing, emotional wellness is a major factor in your child's academic success. Mental illness is a major barrier to learning and academic success. Research has shown that fewer than half of students with serious mental disorders graduate from high school.

My child is doing well in school, so I know there is nothing wrong. Why should my family participate?

While a decline or change in school performance is often an external sign of emotional or substance abuse problems, mental health problems don't always show up in these ways. Often the warning signs are not visible.

Won't children just grow out of emotional problems as they get older?

All children feel sad or worried at times. Usually these feelings are temporary, but not for all. Half of all mental illnesses begin by age 14 and ideally are addressed before they negatively affect a child's future. Screening is a way of identifying areas of concern early on so that the screening staff can assist parents in how to get help for their child.

My child is already receiving mental health services. Should they be screened anyway?

It is a good idea to routinely check in with teens around issues of mental health. Our experience shows that teens will sometimes provide more or different information on the screening questionnaire, than they do to their treatment provider or other adults in their lives. This information can then be shared with you and your child's therapist or doctor, to ensure that all of your child's needs are being met.

Does the Wellness Screen recommend medications for children found to be suffering from depression?

The Wellness Screen makes no diagnoses or treatment recommendations; it is beyond the program's scope. Our goal is to provide parents with information about a possible problem and to link youth in need – to professionals who can perform a complete diagnostic evaluation.

I believe this is a private issue, which belongs in the family, and I don't feel comfortable with my child talking about his or her problems, especially in school.

While we do aim for a high participation rate, the Wellness Screen is completely voluntary, and you and/or your child have the right to opt out of the screening program. Some youth may appear to be normal, happy, and healthy on the outside, but can be in great pain on the inside. They don't realize that they need help, or perhaps don't know how to ask for it. The screening offers another opportunity for youth to acknowledge emotional symptoms – on questionnaires, where they may be more open. Screening results are confidential and are not shared with teachers or included in your student's academic school records.

What happens if the screening identifies emotional problems in my child?

If a potential problem is noted in your child's Wellness Screen, he or she will have a follow-up interview with a trained mental health professional, to determine if they would benefit from a complete evaluation. If this is the case, you will be contacted by the screening staff to discuss your child's results and the clinician's recommendations. And if you would like, screening staff can assist you in contacting a local healthcare professional, to obtain a complete evaluation for your child.

Are the screening results kept confidential? Will they affect my child's academic record and chances for college admission?

We work closely with school staff to develop procedures to ensure your child's confidentiality. Neither the teaching staff nor fellow students are involved in these procedures, and are not aware of individual screening results. The only people who will see the screening results will be the screening staff. ID numbers, rather than names, will identify stored questionnaire date and all screening files are kept separately from academic files and are stored in locked file cabinets.

How will we, the parents, be involved in the screening process?

Parent consent is required for youth to participate in the screening. Parents will be notified by letter if their student's screening score lands in a "normal" range. Alternately, if your student's score reflects that they may benefit from further attention, you will be contacted by staff regarding any questions, and to discuss family access to services. Screening staff will assist families in connecting with a local healthcare professional, if requested. However, parents can always contact screening staff with any questions they may have! Please contact school staff, or Julianne Morrison, clinic co-director of Kettle Moraine Counseling, at: julianne@kettlemorainecounseling.com or 262-334-4340, ext. 3.