

# KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Teen troubles aren't always easy to catch. These are years of change. Your relationship with your teen may be strained; often, trouble shows up in unexpected ways. Parents need to be alert to signs of serious trouble and have resources to turn to when they see them.

- If you think there is something wrong with your teen, there probably is. Gather information from others who know your child, but be persistent if you feel that your teen needs help. Your instincts are usually right!
- Depression is a serious illness in teens that can lead to other dangerous behavior – joining a cult, running away, drug use, and suicide attempts. Signs of depression include; sadness that is more intense and lasts longer than normal; loss of pleasure in activities the teen previously enjoyed; self-destructive behavior; changes in personal appearance; extreme mood swings; rebellion in a child who doesn't normally rebel; inability to concentrate; increased anxiety or paranoia; loss of self-esteem and expression of hopelessness or guilt; lack of appetite or overeating; extreme fatigue or sleep disturbance; change in school performance; frequent physical complaints; self-medicating with drugs or alcohol. Any threat of suicide, talking about suicidal fantasies, or giving away favorite possessions should be taken very seriously. You should intervene right away.
- There are lots of places to get help for your teen, but it may take research and persistence on your part. Your doctor or an alcohol counselor can give you referrals; support groups like Parents Anonymous offer a place to talk to other parents and share experiences about what services have worked for their families. Keep trying until you find the help your family needs!
- A teen in crisis is extraordinarily draining – you are likely to be exhausted and under extreme stress. All members of the household are affected by the teen's problems, so check with his siblings as well. Find ways to give yourself a break and be good to yourself. The good news is that more teens want to be helped and the odds are good that you will make progress.

**Parents Inc. of New Jersey**  
**127 Route 206 South, Suite 10**  
**Trenton, NJ 08610**  
**1-609-585-7666**  
**1-800-843-5437**  
**[www.parentsincfnj.org](http://www.parentsincfnj.org)**