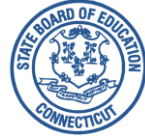





STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Division Director
School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services 

DATE: May 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Mental Health Awareness Month: *Get Outside and Play for Children's Mental Health Day*

Since 1949, the month of May has been designated as National Mental Health Awareness Month. As part of the continuing efforts to support children's mental health, Governor Ned Lamont has declared May 26th of each year to be *Get Outside and Play for Children's Mental Health Day*, and 2023 as the inaugural year. The goal of this day is to promote and educate children and families on the benefits of outdoor activities on children's mental health and wellness.

Researchers have highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted human relationships with the natural environment as outdoor activities became more prevalent. In fact, during the pandemic, adolescents' participation in outdoor recreation was shown to have improved their mental well-being. A [2021 study of adolescents](#) found subjective well-being (SWB) to be strongly associated with outdoor play and nature-based activities, indicating these activities can mediate declines in SWB and play a key role in resilience to stressors for youth.

As we continue to support students' emotional wellbeing, we encourage school leaders to consider new and innovative approaches for promoting children's mental health. The Department is partnering with the Connecticut Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CTAHPERD) and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) to support outdoor activities on this day that are inclusive of all students regardless of ability or skill level in physical activity. Suggested resources can be found at: [Get Outside and Play for Children's Mental Health Day Resources](#).

There are several actions districts can take to observe *Get Outside and Play for Children's Mental Health Day*:

1. Share this memorandum with all members of the school community, including health services staff, administrators, faculty/staff, students, families, and community partners.
2. Assemble and assign roles to a core team of staff and volunteers from families and community partners to organize and facilitate activities for the day.
3. Design activities that are diverse and inclusive to reflect the different ways students can engage in outdoor activities.
4. Encourage adults to participate in the day as well!

If you have any questions, please contact Chlo-Anne.Bobrowski@ct.gov.