



THE AWARENESS DAY YOUTH ACTION: "When I Grow Up"

What is "When I Grow Up"?

"When I Grow Up" is an opportunity for youth older than 8 years old to become mental health advocates and raise awareness about the mental health needs of children and youth throughout the United States. This is an alternative activity for older youth who prefer to engage in a more age-appropriate event other than the nationwide Art Action.

The action will take place simultaneously across the country on National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on Thursday, May 6, 2010. "When I Grow Up" allows youth to bring a collective voice to children's mental health issues from their unique perspective. It also gives communities an opportunity to see youth in action as advocates for greater access to mental health services for themselves, younger children, and families.

This year, the nationwide focus of Awareness Day is early childhood. The goal is to encourage communities across the country to:

- 1) Nurture the social and emotional well-being of children from birth; and
- 2) Integrate mental health into every environment that impacts child development from birth; and
- 3) Look for and discuss milestones of a child's social and emotional development from birth.

How do I complete the Youth Action?

Schools and Youth groups that want to participate in the Youth Action can access [customizable signs](#) messages that feature the headline "When I Grow Up... ". The signs' format provides space to write a message or draw an image that expresses the aspirations of young children and the goals of youth participating in the Youth Action. The back of the signs feature facts and statistics that speak to how providing services and supports for children's mental health and their social and emotional development increases the likelihood that all children can attain their goals and see their childhood dreams become realities.

In preparing the signs for your Youth Action:

- 1) Identify the best method for producing signs that are readable from a distance. We recommend 24" x 36".
- 2) Print out one sign for each youth that will be participating.
- 3) Help the youth personalize their sign with a picture or written message about what they want to be when they grow up. You may want to consider hosting a session to bring youth together to personalize their signs.
- 4) On Awareness Day, youth groups in all time zones across the country will conduct the Youth Action simultaneously.

- 5) The agreed-upon time for the action on Thursday, May 6, is 1 p.m. EDT/12 p.m. CDT/11 a.m. MDT/10 a.m. PDT
- 6) At this time children and youth will hold up their "When I Grow Up" signs that feature what they want to be when they grow up.

Children and youth will then turn the signs around to display facts about children's mental health. The facts will speak to data about children and youth mental health and how youth can and do thrive when they receive comprehensive mental health services.

Why get involved?

"When I Grow Up" is an opportunity to show support for the total well-being of all children and youth and to help inspire hope for their future. Through the Youth Action you can help to educate your community about the importance of children's mental health and social inclusion.

How do I get my community involved?

As you may have noted, "When I Grow Up" is intended to take place during school hours. This creates a unique and exciting opportunity for communities to reach out and partner with their local schools and have them focus on children and youth mental health on Awareness Day: May 6, 2010. You should also consider partnering with local child-serving organizations, local mental health providers, and child care centers.

How can I participate?

Contact Ashley Keenan at Parent Support Network at 401-467-6855/800-483-8844 or A.Keenan@psnri.org for a pledge form. Once you commit to conducting the Youth Action, "When I Grow Up," via your submitted pledge form you will receive additional information and materials necessary to stage the Youth Action. This will include a set of 24X36 color posters and 8 X11 color individual activity sheets. Please feel free to reproduce.

Your creativity in partnering with schools, youth groups, and organizations that serve youth and children in your community can create a learning opportunity for your community that is powerful, uplifting, and empowering.

Please see enclosed sample Youth Action individual activity sheet.

Visit www.ripep.org and <http://www.samhsa.gov/children/youth.aspx> for more information.