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COLORADO

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**  
You can donate starting November 1.  
Go to [ColoradoGives.org/AuMHC](http://ColoradoGives.org/AuMHC)  
to schedule your donation!

**Colorado Gives Day: December 6, 2016**

**Your Donation Goes Farther!**

We hope you will think of us on Colorado Gives Day! This statewide day of giving is a chance to help the people of Aurora find better peace of mind through increased mental health services. \$1 Million in matching funds is

available through community sponsors. The fund proportionally boosts every dollar donated and will help to make your money go farther.

For example, if we receive 10 percent of the total donations, we will receive 10 percent of the Incentive Fund.



- 1 **Viewpoint Plaza Counseling Center**  
1695 East 2nd Avenue
- 2 **North Center**  
11059 East Bethany Drive
- 3 **Hampden Center**  
14301 East Hampden Avenue
- 4 **Alameda Center**  
10782 East Alameda Avenue
- 5 **Providers' Resource Clearinghouse (PRC)**  
14500 East 33rd Place
- 6 **Community Transitions Center**  
1390 & 1400 Chambers Road
- 7 **Intercept Center**  
1695 East 2nd Avenue
- 8 **Fitzsimons Center**  
2206 Victor Street
- 9 **Galena Center**  
1504 Galena Street
- 10 **Asian Pacific Development Center**  
1537 Alton Street
- 11 **Chambers Center**  
791 Chambers Road
- 12 **Smoky Hill Center**  
20971 East Smoky Hill Road

303.617.2300  
www.aumhc.org

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# PERSPECTIVES

FALL 2016

## The Realities of Childhood Anxiety

A Conversation with Child and Family Psychologist Dr. Kirsten Anderson

Statistics and mental health professionals alike will tell you it's more common than you might think for youth to experience some form of anxiety or depression. An estimated 17 million children and adolescents in the U.S. have or have had a psychiatric illness at some point in their childhood.

So how can you tell if the anxiety you are witnessing in your child is normal behavior, or if it's time to seek professional help? We sat down with Dr. Kirsten Anderson, doctor of psychology at Aurora Mental Health Center (AuMHC), to talk about childhood anxiety – one of the most common childhood mental health issues.

### Dr. Anderson, could you start by telling us a bit about anxiety and its causes?

Absolutely. A lot of people don't realize that anxiety is a natural, biological reaction to stress. When animals or humans are faced with a stressful situation, our bodies need to fire up, whether physically or emotionally, to manage the situation. You may have heard of this as "fight or flight." So, we actually need some anxiety – it serves a purpose. But, we want to be able to manage it and respond to the stressor in an effective way, as opposed to letting it interfere with our lives or general wellbeing.

### Do you think kids these days are more stressed?

The short answer is yes. Society has changed a lot. Kids have a lot less free time; they are pushed harder to be successful. They're also exposed to a lot of negative media, and the world just moves a lot quicker. These can all be triggers and they stem from modern life in the U.S.

### What are other signs of problematic anxiety?

General red flags that parents should look for include declining grades in school and an increase in sadness or anger. There can also be physical signs. At times, when

children start complaining of muscle aches, headaches, or body pain that doesn't have an obvious cause, that can be a sign of anxiety. Kids with anxiety also may have trouble sleeping and can be difficult to get going in the morning. Children who are anxious may start trying to avoid things like school or social activities.

### Are there things to do before going to seek professional help – to help kids deal with anxiety?

The most helpful thing parents can do is to spend time with their child, find out what is going on in their life and what they get worried about. Parents can then normalize anxiety and help kids develop strategies to work through the problem.

There are a lot of groups and tools that teach kids (and parents) how to relax. Here at AuMHC, we have groups that teach mindfulness, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, and a variety of other relaxation practices. I've experienced first-hand that these kinds of activities can really help to lower stress levels in children and adults.

### When parents think it's time to seek professional help, how can they know for sure?

Parents know their kids best. If they're

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continued from front

not able to calm their child down or help to reduce the anxiety, that's a clear sign it's time to talk to a professional. Sometimes kids need different tools, or they need a different person to talk to about the problem.

**If parents are worried about taking their kid to a professional, can you offer some advice?**

The most important thing to realize is that many children need this kind of help. We see a lot of kids in therapy, and I think many adults can relate to experiencing severe anxiety at one time or another. If your child had asthma, you wouldn't hesitate to have a doctor give your child an inhaler — it can be helpful to see mental health symptoms in a similar light. Ultimately, Aurora Mental Health Center has professionals that can help.

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Mostly, parents should just spend the time to get

to know their children well enough that they know what their child's experience is and how they're doing emotionally. The more quality time parents can spend with their children, the more they'll know what makes them anxious or sad — and also what excites them and makes them laugh!

**Mental health problems can be treated.**

If you are a parent or caregiver and need help starting a conversation with your child or teen about mental health, visit [aumhc.org](http://aumhc.org) or call 303-617-2300 to talk to someone for more information. You can also learn more by visiting the links below:

[KidsHealth.org](http://KidsHealth.org) on *Childhood Anxiety Disorders* - [kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html](http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html)

*FAQ from National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)* - [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/treatment-of-children-with-mental-illness-fact-sheet/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/treatment-of-children-with-mental-illness-fact-sheet/index.shtml)



# Health insurance: Get covered. Get piece of mind. ACAN Can Help.

Meet the ACAN team, a collaboration of Aurora providers that have specialists ready to assist with enrolling the community into the healthcare insurance exchange.

Coloradans can apply for Medicaid year-round, but the Open Enrollment period for healthcare benefits (when most people have to apply) is coming up fast: **November 1, 2016, to January 31, 2017.**

Aurora Coverage Assistance Network (ACAN) is a team of experts from 14 agencies that can help you get insurance through Connect4Health, Colorado's health insurance exchange or assist with the Medicaid process.

They can:

- Help you enroll for the first time
- Re-enroll
- Answer any questions about getting health insurance
- Help overcome language and cultural barriers
- Help you understand your rights and how subsidies (discounted plans) work.

To schedule an appointment online, go to: [www.connectaurora.org](http://www.connectaurora.org)

Or, call: **303.617.2328** (English)  
**720.975.0417** (Spanish)

# 41<sup>st</sup> Celebration & 10<sup>th</sup> Annual STUDENT ART CONTEST & SHOW

Please join us as we celebrate our service to the community and Aurora's student artists at our **FREE 41st Celebration.**

**ALL ARTWORK ENTERED WILL BE DISPLAYED AT THE ART SHOW!** We will honor all participating students and present awards to the winners.

We look forward to the opportunity to recognize some of our community's young artist.

**This year's theme:**

**"What Brings Joy to Your Life, or Happiness to Others?"**

**When:** Wednesday, October 19, 2016  
5:00 p.m. - Reception & View Art  
5:45 p.m. - Program Begins

**Where:** Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center, 15500 East 40th Ave., Denver

**Who:** Open to anyone from Aurora, eastern Adams and Arapahoe Counties as well as families and teachers of the artists.



For more information please e-mail [annualcelebration@aumhc.org](mailto:annualcelebration@aumhc.org) or call **303.617.2300**  
RSVP not required but appreciated.

Thank you to our contest sponsor  
**CITYWIDE BANKS.**



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