



# Supporting the Mental Health of Children Seeking Asylum in New York City

*For providers and the front-line  
helpers who serve them*



# Executive Summary

Asylum seekers continue to enter New York City in search of safety, freedom and opportunities. The humanitarian crisis is ongoing and unprecedented. City agencies along with faith communities, non-profit providers, volunteer and advocacy groups, and experts from different disciplines continue to tirelessly and compassionately contribute to the extensive relief efforts in support of these newest members of our City. To meet their unique needs, New York City offers a host of health and social services for asylum seeking families at emergency sites.

## Impact of Asylum-Seeking Experience on Mental Health

Asylum seeking adults and children can face increased rates of depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress due to the impact of their journey including traumatic experiences of family separation, exposure to violence, and challenges faced in their new place of living. Addressing the mental health needs of families is highly critical during this time of transition and rebuilding, hence **integrating mental health services into the network of resources has been an integral part of the City's response.**

As helpers and providers who engage with asylum-seeking families in navigating New York City's complex social service system and providing care, **you are often the first point of contact for families new in the City.** Caregivers may openly express to you their emotional distress, or a need for guidance on how to help their children cope. Additionally, you may observe a family in need of support with mental health, even if they have not explicitly voiced their distress or concerns.

## How To Use This Guide

**This guide provides resources that you can use to enhance emotional health and wellness of asylum-seeking children and caregivers.** These resources have been curated to ensure relevance, quality, and ease of access.

Having knowledge of common mental health challenges and guidance about ways to cope helps normalize asylum seekers' experiences and provides hope, an essential element of recovery from any traumatic experience. For some families who are experiencing severe distress, a referral to professional care is warranted.

This guide includes resources to::

- 1. Strengthen the mental health of children:** Increasing children's coping skills, talking about mental health and strengthening bonding by doing positive activities together all help to nurture emotional and mental well-being. Building adult stress management skills and mental health knowledge also help caregivers expand upon the ways they support children.
- 2. Access mental health services:** Learning about the steps to take, and what to expect when a child, young person or caregiver needs professional mental health services, can make the referral process smoother.
- 3. Manage work related trauma and stress:** Listening to first-hand trauma experiences of children and family members can lead to stress and vicarious trauma symptoms in helpers. This can take an emotional toll, and affect life outside of work. Psychological First Aid and learning about how to manage work stress will help prevent burnout, maintain your capacity, and support your well-being.

**Note:** The enclosed guidance solely focuses on mental health for children and caregivers, and is not meant to be a comprehensive resource guide for all social service and mental health resources the City has to offer. Please refer to the [NYC Office of Asylum Seeker Operations](#) site for more resources.

## Mental Health Resources Included In This Guide



### Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Resources For Caregivers And Service Providers

*SEL resources offer guidance for caregivers on how to strengthen the mental health of children and enhance the coping skills of children and caring adults.*



### Information To Help Families Access Mental Health Services

*These resources help caregivers and helpers learn ways to access professional mental health services when needed.*



### Guides For Managing Work Related Trauma And Stress

*These resources help front line helpers manage the high level of stress experienced when working with traumatized displaced populations.*



### Up-To-Date Information on The City's Emergency Response And Related Services

*The network of services for the asylum-seeking population is complex and everchanging. This resource allows helpers and asylum seekers stay up to date on all resources available.*

# Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Resources For Caregivers And Service Providers



**SCAN this QR code to open all these resources links.**

Open the camera app on your phone and point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears to open Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health webpage where you can download this guide onto your device.

## **My Resilience Workbook - Inner Space** [English Only]

[Mi Libro de Actividades de Resiliencia - Espacio Interior](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Children ages 5-10
- What: Workbook
- How: Printed or used digitally and provided directly to caregivers and families
- Credit: Written by Tzivy Reiter and Naomi Baum, Ohel Children's Home and Family Services (shared with permission from the authors)



*INNER SPACE, for parents, helps children ages 5-10 explore feelings and cope with adversity and hard times. Caregivers can use this playful tool together with their child(ren).*

## **Learning what to expect from children who have experienced trauma** [English]

[Cómo entender el trauma](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Children of all ages
- What: Flyer
- How: Printed or used digitally and provided directly to caregivers and families
- Credit: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



*This guide educates caregivers about the range of emotional and behavioral changes their children may experience during their asylumseeking journey and includes helpful tips for families reuniting after a period of separation.*

## **Talking to young children when violence happens** [English]

[Hablando con los Niños Cuando Sucede La Violencia](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Children up to age 10
- What: Tips
- How: Printed or used digitally and provided directly to caregivers and families
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*When young children go through something scary, they look to adults for comfort. This guide helps caregivers respond to their children's needs in times of adversity and uncertainty to help them feel safe and secure.*

## **Talking to teens when violence happens** [English]

[Hablano con los Adolescents Cuando Sucede la Violencia](#) [En Espanol]

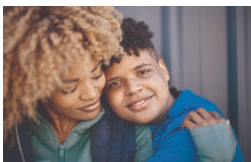
- Who: Children ages 11 and older, anyone who works with youth
- What: Toolkit
- How: Children ages 11 and older, anyone who works with youth
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*Teens look to adults for comfort and clarification about what happened when they experience something scary, whether they express explicitly or not. This guide provides caregivers step-by-step guidance on framing conversations to help teens feel safe.*

## **Talking to young people about their mental health** [English]

- Who: Children ages 11 and older, anyone who works with youth
- What: Toolkit
- How: Children ages 11 and older, anyone who works with youth
- Credit: Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health



*As adults who care for and work with young people, you may be among the first people to notice concerning changes in behavior or emotional wellbeing. If you do, it's time to start a conversation. Use these five steps to learn to talk with young people about their mental health, maintain privacy, build trust, and make connections to mental health providers.*

## **Tips for healing after disasters** [English]

- Who: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth
- What: Tips
- How: Print in its entirety or in part or provide directly to caregivers
- Credit: Psychological First Aid

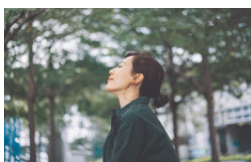


*This psychological first aid comprehensive guide helps caregivers and providers cope with traumatic circumstances. It includes parent tips for how to help children at different developmental stages cope.*

## **Creating soothing environments for family** [English]

[Creando Ambientes de Apoyo Cuando Suceden Hechos Alarmantes](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth
- What: Tips
- How: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*Building routines, rituals, and rhythm into your home life restores a sense of safety. The tips in this guide help survivors understand how to create an environment conducive to restoring calm on the inside by structuring what's outside.*



# Help for Caregivers and Pregnant People



## **Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents** [English]

[Actividades sencillas para niños y adolescentes](#) [En Español]

- Who: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth of all ages
- What: Activity Ideas
- How: This resource can be printed and provided directly to caregivers
- Credit: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



*Recognizing play as an important way young children learn and maintain a sense of wellbeing, this guide lists activities that can be enjoyed by parents and children together. These activities can enhance the bonds between caregivers and children which is effective with boosting mental health. Activities here do not need a lot of prep time or resources and are helpful to parents looking for novel ways to distract young children.*

## **Practicing healthy coping for caregivers** [English]

[Prácticas para el Bienestar: Breves Recordatorios para Tiempos de Estrés](#) [En Español]

- Who: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth of all ages
- What: Tips
- How: This resource can be printed and posted. It can also be provided directly to caregivers of children of all ages.
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*This short list of well-being practices and gentle reminders for times of stress describes actions that caregivers can take to immediately reduce the body's stress response and restore calm.*

## **Help for People who are Pregnant or who Have Recently Given Birth** [English]

[Ayuda para personas embarazadas o que han dado a luz recientemente](#) [En Español]

- Who: People who are pregnant or who have recently given birth who need support
- What: Tips, connection to emotional and social support, information about postpartum mental health, and help line
- How: View website on a mobile phone; Call the help line: 1-800-944-4773
- Credit: Postpartum Support International

## Information about mood and anxiety during pregnancy and after giving birth [English]

Trastorno del estado de ánimo y ansiedad en la etapa perinatal [En Español]

- Who: People who are pregnant or who have recently given birth
- What: Information about how to identify perinatal depression and anxiety, risk factors, and ways to seek help
- How: Print or view on a mobile phone
- Credit: Postpartum Support International

**PERINATAL MOOD AND ANXIETY DISORDERS (PMADS)**  
Perinatal: Anytime during pregnancy through the first year postpartum

**SYMPTOMS**

- Feelings of guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Feelings of anger, rage, or irritability, or scary and unwanted thoughts
- Lack of interest in the baby or difficulty bonding with baby
- Loss of interest, joy or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Disturbances of sleep and appetite
- Crying and sadness, constant worry or racing thoughts
- Physical symptoms like dizziness, hot flashes, and nausea
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

**TREATMENT OPTIONS**

- Counseling
- Medication
- Support from others
- Exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Healthy diet
- Bright light therapy
- Yoga
- Relaxation techniques

**RISK FACTORS**

- History of depression, anxiety, OCD
- Thyroid imbalance, diabetes, endocrine disorders
- Lack of support from family and friends
- Pregnancy or delivery complications, infertility, miscarriage or infant loss
- Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)
- Financial stress or poverty
- Abrupt discontinuation of breastfeeding
- History of Abuse
- Unwanted or unplanned pregnancy

Postpartum Support International | [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net) | 800.944.4773 (call or text)  
Updated: March 27, 2023

PMAD Infographic ENGLISH

**TRASTORNO DEL ESTADO DE ÁNIMO Y ANSIEDAD EN LA ETAPA PERINATAL**  
Etapa perinatal: se refiere a cualquier tiempo durante el embarazo y el primer año de posparto o puerperio

**SÍNTOMAS**

- Tener sentimientos de culpa, vergüenza y desesperación
- Tener sentimiento de enojo, ira, irritabilidad, miedo o pensamientos no deseados
- No tener interés en el bebé o tener dificultad de apagar al bebé
- Falta de interés, alegría o placer en hacer cosas que solías hacer
- Interrupción en el sueño y el apetito
- Estar llorando y tener tristeza, preocupación constante o pensamientos acelerados
- Tener síntomas físicos incluyendo mareos, bochornos, y náusea
- Tener posibles pensamientos de lastimar a tu bebé o a ti misma

**OPCIONES DE TRATAMIENTO**

- Consejería
- Medicamento
- Apoyo social de alguien más
- Ejercicio
- Rutina saludable de dormir
- Dieta saludable
- Terapia de luz
- Yoga
- Técnicas de relajación

**FACTORES DE RIESGO**

- Tener antecedente de episodios de depresión, ansiedad, TCO
- Tener imbalances en la tiroides, diabetes, o trastorno endocrinológico
- Falta de apoyo de la familia o amigos
- Complicaciones en el embarazo o en el parto, infertilidad, aborto espontáneo o pérdida infantil
- Síndrome premenstrual
- Estrés financiero o pobreza
- Parar de dar pecho a tu bebé repentinamente
- Tener antecedentes de abuso
- Haber tenido un embarazo no planeado o querido

Postpartum Support International | [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)  
800.944.4773 (#1 para español) 971-203-7773 (texto 'AYUDA')

PMAD Infographic SPANISH

## Call to receive doula support, resources, and services for pregnant people and people with infants

- Who: Families with a member who is pregnant or who are caring for infants
- What: Access to a variety of resources and support for pregnant people and families with pregnant people and infants
- How: **Call NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 347-396-7979** between 9 am and 5 pm and connect with a trained health worker to receive screening/referral for support and social services that help pregnant people and their families
- Translation is available – ask for the language you prefer
- Credit: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

# Information To Help Families Access Mental Health Services

## NYC Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health

[How to Access Mental Health Services and Support in NYC](#) [English]

[¿Cómo ayudar a alguien que necesita cuidado para la salud mental?](#) [En Español]

- **Use this guide to find the right kind of help (available in multiple languages)**
- **Who:** All ages
- **What:** In New York City, everyone can have healthcare, including mental healthcare. There are services that are free or low cost. Services are in your language and can be found in all neighborhoods in New York City. You can get healthcare even if you do not have insurance coverage. You can have health insurance at any age. You can get healthcare regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- **How:** This resource can be viewed digitally on the NYC Mayor's Office Of Community Mental Health website from any device that has access to the internet

## NYC Teenspace

- **Who:** Any teenager age 13 to 17 living in NYC
- **What:** Free mental health support program. Whether you struggle with mental health challenges or just want somebody to talk to about your everyday ups and downs.
- **How:** [Visit Talkspace](#) and enter your address and birthday. Enter your parent or guardian's information and email address so they can provide consent. Complete a simple online assessment. You will then get matched with a licensed therapist for ongoing virtual support, access online mental health exercises or both.



# NYC

teenspace

**Private talk and text support for city teens, anytime anywhere**

A NYC Health Department program, powered by Talkspace



# Information To Help Families Access Mental Health Services

## Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD)

- Who: Ages 14-24
- What: Drop-in Center -- A safe space for young people to access food, clothing, showers, laundry and mental health and substance use support. Also offering educational, vocation, housing, and **family reunification assistance**. Services offered regardless of immigration status. **May be especially useful for Asylum Seekers ages 14-24 traveling independently.**
- How: This resource can be printed and posted in high visibility areas or handed out directly to youth and young adults.

### RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

#### DROP-IN SERVICES

Young people ages 14 through 24 are welcome! Food, clothing, showers, laundry and case management services are available. Receive referrals to crisis services programs, Transitional Independent Living programs and additional supportive services.

##### MANHATTAN

**All Forney Center**   
307 West 38th Street  
New York, NY 10018  
(212) 206-0574

**The Door**  
555 Broome Street  
New York, NY 10013  
(646) 690-8986  
**Mon-Fri: 9 AM-6 PM**  
Sat: 10 AM-6 PM

**Safe Horizon Streetwork Harlem**  
209 West 125th Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 695-2220  
**Mon, Tues, Thurs-Sun: 10 AM-6 PM**

##### BROOKLYN

**SCO Family of Services**   
774 Rockaway Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11211  
(718) 685-3850

##### QUEENS

**Rising Ground Inc**   
165-13 Jamaica Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
(718) 526-2400 ext. 2080

**Rising Ground Inc (Far Rockaway Site)**  
1600 Central Avenue  
Far Rockaway, NY 11691  
(718) 471-6816 ext. 2123  
**Mon-Thurs 2 PM-8 PM**  
**Fri: 11 AM-7 PM, Sat: 12 PM-8 PM**

##### STATEN ISLAND

**Project Hospitality**   
27 Port Richmond Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10302  
(718) 876-4752

**BRONX**

**Cardinal McCloskey Community Services**   
333 East 149th Street  
Bronx, NY 10451  
(718) 993-5495  
(917) 334-0957

**DYCD Youth Connect**  
**1 (800) 246-4646**  
**(646) 343-6800**  
Monday - Friday 9 AM to 5 PM



**NYC**  
Department of Youth & Community Development  
www.nyc.gov/dycd  
https://bit.ly/hyccenters

## Runaway & Homeless Youth PALM CARD [English]

### SERVICIOS PARA JÓVENES FUGITIVOS Y SIN HOGAR

#### CENTROS DE ATENCIÓN

Los jóvenes de 14 a 24 años son bienvenidos. Disponen de comida, ropa, duchas, lavandería y servicios de gestión de casos. Pueden ser remitidos a programas de servicios en caso de crisis, programas de transición a la vida independiente y otros servicios de apoyo.

\*Llama para comprobar los horarios de apertura y admisión.

##### MANHATTAN

**All Forney Center**  
321 West 125th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10027  
(212) 206-0574 

**The Door**  
555 Broome Street  
New York, N.Y. 10013  
(646) 690-8986  
Lun-Vie: 9am - 6pm  
Sáb: 10am-6pm

**Safe Horizon Streetwork Harlem**  
209 West 125th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10027  
(212) 695-2220  
Lun-Vie: 9am-6pm  
Sáb: 10am-6pm

##### BROOKLYN

**Cardinal McCloskey Community Services**   
333 East 149th Street  
Bronx, N.Y. 10451  
(718) 993-5495  
(917) 334-0957 

##### BROOKLYN

**SCO Family of Services**  
774 Rockaway Avenue  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211  
(718) 685-3850 

##### QUEENS

**Rising Ground Inc**  
165-13 Jamaica Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Jamaica, N.Y. 11432  
(718) 526-2400 ext. 2080 

**Rising Ground Inc (Centro de Far Rockaway)**  
1600 Central Avenue  
Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691  
(718) 471-6816 ext. 2123  
Lun-Vie: 9am-6pm  
Sáb: 10am-6pm

##### STATEN ISLAND

**Project Hospitality**  
27 Port Richmond Avenue  
Staten Island, N.Y. 10302  
(718) 876-4752 

DYCD outreach@projecthospitality.org

#### PROGRAMAS DE SERVICIOS EN CASO DE CRISIS

Los programas de servicios en caso de crisis del DYCD ofrecen alojamiento de emergencia e intervención en caso de crisis. Estos servicios se ofrecen a jóvenes de 16 a 20 años (jóvenes fugitivos y sin hogar) y de 21 a 24 años (jóvenes adultos sin hogar). Los jóvenes pueden alojarse hasta 120 días.

##### BRONX

**The Bridge**  
(347) 275-2749  
abarter@governancehouses.org  
\*Personas de identidad femenina/jóvenes adultos sin hogar

**Maya's Place**  
(718) 844-2079  
aluong@childrensvillage.org

##### BROOKLYN

**All Forney Center\***  
\*Contacta con el centro de acogida  
(212) 206-0574  
ayoung@allforneycenter.org

##### MANHATTAN

**Convent House**  
Menores de 21 años (y madre o hijo)  
(212) 613-0300

**All Forney Center\***  
\*Contacta con el centro de acogida  
(718) 844-2079  
dovis@allforneycenter.org

##### QUEENS

**All Forney Center\***  
Jóvenes adultos sin hogar (De 21 a 24 años)  
(718) 308-0574  
dovis@allforneycenter.org

##### Safe Horizon Streetwork Harlem

Menores de 21 años (y madre o hijo)  
(917) 507-1562

**Sheltering Area/Safe Space\***  
(917) 470-3790  
(947) 266-7544  
\*Personas de identidad masculina

#### PROGRAMAS DE TRANSICIÓN A LA VIDA INDEPENDIENTE

Los programas de transición a la vida independiente del DYCD ofrecen servicios residenciales a los jóvenes de 18 a 24 años (jóvenes fugitivos sin hogar) y de 21 a 24 años (jóvenes adultos sin hogar). Los jóvenes pueden alojarse hasta 24 meses.

#### ASISTENCIA EN LAS CALLES

Las camionetas que recorren los 5 distritos proporcionan ropa, alimentos, información y transporte a programas de servicios en caso de crisis y centros de acogida.

 Para seguir las últimas noticias y ubicaciones, sigue Streetwork en Instagram: @streetworknyc

#### SERVICIOS DISPONIBLES EN TODOS LOS PROGRAMAS

- Programas educativos • Capacitación profesional • Asistencia para la colocación laboral
- Asesoramiento • Capacitación en habilidades básicas para la vida • Servicios de salud mental
- Remisión y colocación en viviendas • Ayuda a la migración familiar (cuando corresponde)

**NYC**  
Department of Youth & Community Development

CONTACTA CON DYCD COMMUNITY CONNECT LLAMANDO AL 1.800.246.4646  
O AL 646.343.6800; DE LUNES A VIERNES, 9AM-5PM

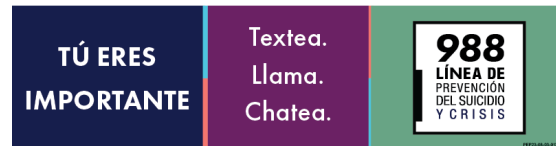
 @NYCYOUTH

## Runaway & Homeless Youth PALM CARD [En Español]

# Information To Help Families Access Mental Health Services

## 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- Who: Any age
- What: If you or a loved one are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, 988 can help. 988 is your connection to free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health and substance use support, information and referrals. **Speak to a counselor via [phone](#), [text](#), or [chat](#)** and get access to mental health and substance use services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7/365. NYC 988 is your connection to get the help you need.
- **[Call or Text 988](#)**
- [Chat Now](#) at [988lifeline.org/chat/](https://988lifeline.org/chat/)
- [Find Services](#) at [nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988)
- Relay Service for Deaf/Hard of Hearing: [Call 711](#)
- Español: [988](#), Aprete 2
- Veteran's Crisis Line dial [988](#), press 1
- LGBTQI+ Youth & Young Adults dial [988](#), press 3
- How: [Find ready-to-print resources here in both English y español](#). SAMHSA provides organizations an ability [to order limited supplies from the SAMHSA store for free](#). This resource can be posted in high visibility areas to inform the public. They can also be provided directly to caregivers and people of all ages.



# Guides for Managing Work Related Trauma and Stress

## [Psychological First Aid Palm Card for Stress Management](#) [English]

- Who: Adult staff members and helpers
- What: Explains the PRN (Pause-Reset-Nourish) framework and effective actions to manage stress and restore calm while at work
- How: The palm card can be accessed digitally or printed and carried by staff. Printing one page double sided will make 4 palm cards
- Credit: Mayor's Office Of Community Mental Health, developed from: [nctsn.org](https://nctsn.org)
- Age: Adult staff members and helpers

## [Psychological First Aid Training Guide For Staff](#) [English]

- What: This guide highlights the culturally responsive care and compassionate approach that recognizes the valuable work helpers do each day while teaching a set of evidence-informed tools to assist newly arrived asylum-seeking children and families through early transitions.
- How: The resource guide can be accessed digitally or printed and distributed
- Credit: National Child Traumatic Stress Network

## Updates to the City's Emergency Response

The NYC Office of Asylum Seeker Operations (OASO) work recognizes the city's response to the emerging asylum seekers' migration from international borders to our city. Created in March 2023, OASO is primarily responsible for overseeing and coordinating all support services for asylum seekers and their families.





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### **About The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH):**

The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health is committed to improving mental health outcomes for all New Yorkers, so that more people can get the mental health support they need to live healthy and content lives. We work with City agencies to reduce barriers to mental health care for underserved communities. Our priorities are rooted in equity, racial justice, and cultural responsiveness. We adopt a community-centered and strength-based approach that recognizes diverse perspectives, lived experiences, resilience, and the unique needs of New Yorkers.

You can [visit our website for more information and mental health resources](https://www.mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us).

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