

Remember that in order to help your child, it is important that you take care of yourself. Make sure that you are taking the time to deal with your own stress and reactions to this disaster. You do not have to “fix” how your child feels. Try to help your child understand and cope with the disruption of life in Mobile County. Despite improvement of beaches and departure of cleanup crews, healing takes time for most children. Some children may need professional help. If signs of stress do not subside, or if they get worse, consider consulting a mental health professional trained in working with children. You can receive free services by calling **1-800-639-REBOUND**.

Project Rebound is a collaborative effort of state and local agencies to provide comprehensive behavioral health response to residents of Baldwin and Mobile counties who were impacted by the oil spill. Services include outreach, counseling, referral, public education, and resiliency building.



**1-800-639-REBOUND**

### **Deaf or Hard of Hearing?**

Please use the statewide relay system to contact Project Rebound: **711**

find us on the web @  
[www.mh.alabama.gov/projectrebound](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/projectrebound)

## **Tips for Talking to Children & Youth About the Oil Spill Disaster in Mobile County**

Ways to Help at Home for Preschoolers to Adolescents

The stress and impact of the oil spill can be as hard on children as adults. Some children may be affected without anyone knowing. Without meaning to, parents may make a child feel that it is not all right to talk about the experience. This may cause confusion, self-doubt and feelings of helplessness in a child. A child needs to hear that many feelings are normal during and after an event. Knowing this helps a child cope with the experience.

Children and youth may show signs of stress due to the losses and changes caused by the oil spill in the Gulf Coast or worry about parents losing their jobs. Children may be distressed by the image of oil and large numbers of workers cleaning beaches from Fort Morgan to Perdido Pass. Children may lose friends whose families must move for economic reasons. Signs may include sadness, tantrums, aggressive or withdrawn behavior, and a return to outgrown behavior. Signs may also include stomach aches and headaches, and an ongoing desire to stay home from school or away from friends. These signs are normal and usually do not last long. You can help your child with the following suggestions.



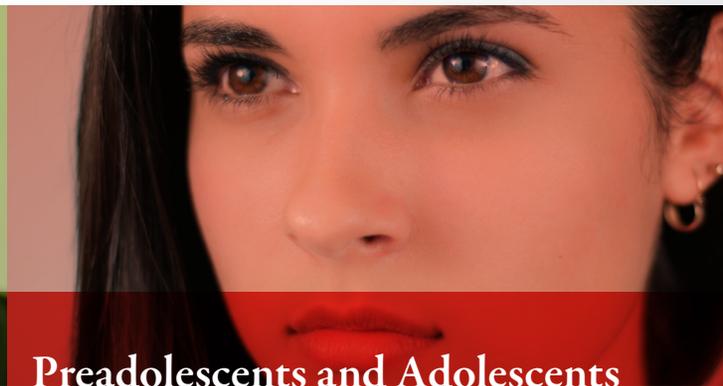
### **Preschooler**

- Stick to regular family routines
- Make an extra effort to provide comfort and support
- Avoid separation when possible
- Allow your child to sleep in the parents' room for a limited time
- Encourage your child to express feelings through play, drawing, puppet shows and storytelling
- Limit watching television shows about the spill



### **Elementary Age Children**

- Provide extra attention
- Set gentle but firm limits for acting out behavior
- Always listen to your child's telling of the experience
- Encourage your child to express feelings through talk and play
- Provide chores and activities that are structured, but not too demanding
- Explain how people are helping to respond to the oil spill and how communities are impacted by this disaster



### **Preadolescents and Adolescents**

- Provide extra attention
- Be there to listen to your child, but do not force talk about feelings
- Encourage discussion of experiences among peers
- Urge your child to take part in physical activities
- Support the return to regular activities when possible
- Promote healthy caring and exercise habits
- Limit exposure to disturbing television shows
- Keep conversations about the claims process private