

**LISTEN TO CHILDREN  
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS  
A MENTOR PROGRAM OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA**

**Listen to Children** volunteers offer one-on-one mentoring to Broward County's elementary age children. Children benefit from the Listener Program because it helps them with coping skills important for healthy living. More specifically, **Listeners can help your child enhance his/her self-esteem, improve communication skills, and learn other valuable skills such as decision-making and problem-solving.**

**WHY YOUR CHILD WAS SELECTED**

Your child was recommended for participation in the Listener Program. Why? Some children are selected to help them deal with a specific problem or situation such as shyness or difficulty making friends. In other cases, they could be dealing with a life change like the birth of a sibling, separation/divorce of parents, illness/death of a loved one, or difficulty adjusting to a recent move. Others are selected to give them an outlet for their energy and imagination. Every child can benefit from a Listener's attention. **Children cannot meet with a Listener without a signed written consent (Parent/Guardian Permission Slip) from you.**

**WHO IS THE VOLUNTEER?**

Volunteers come from all walks of life. They are men and women, young and old, married, single, divorced or widowed, and they represent the ethnic diversity of our community. The Mental Health Association provides 12 hours of training to the Listener mentors. Each volunteer undergoes an extensive screening, background check, and fingerprinting in compliance with Broward County School Board protocols. MHA staff also provides ongoing training, support, and supervision for Listeners who receive monthly support from professional Advisory Leaders.

**WHAT DO LISTENERS DO?**

Your child and his/her Listener meet one-on-one for 30 minutes of uninterrupted quality time once each week. Some Listeners play games, and others just chat; however, all of them focus on communication. The child is given an opportunity to explore issues, examine alternatives, and to understand the consequences of their decisions and actions. Schoolwork is not done during the time together – unless the child requests help.

**CAN PARENTS/GUARDIANS MEET THE CHILD'S LISTENER?**

It's natural for you to want to meet the person who spends time with your child each week; however, Listeners do not have contact with you or other members of your family. The reason is that the Listener works with your child as a *partner*. If the Listener becomes involved with you, he/she will become just another adult and lose that special status with your child.

**HOW DO PARENTS/GUARDIANS KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON?**

As a concerned caregiver, you'll want to know whether the Listener is helpful to your child. If you are curious, you can ask the School Counselor to give you feedback on your child's progress. Your child will probably want to tell you about his/her experience with the Listener as well. **NOTE:** Listeners are not assigned to a school or where their children attend. This is to respect each child's privacy.

**OTHER INFORMATION**

MHA Mission: To promote mental health and victory over mental illness and related challenges through education, prevention, advocacy, research and empowerment. The children's programs are under the prevention services of the association. If you or a family member needs information or referrals, call 954 746-2055.

**Mental health is a goal for everyone!**

Visit **[www.mhasefl.org](http://www.mhasefl.org)** for information on other services provided by MHA.