

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Oppositional and Defiant Children Information for School Clinicians

Definition

Students with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) exhibit a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior lasting at least 6 months that causes significant impairment in functioning. The child or adolescent may often lose their temper, actively defy adults, and appear spiteful. Other symptoms may include frequent temper tantrums, blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior, and being easily annoyed by others.

Why do we care?

Five to fifteen percent of school-age children have ODD. When compared to their peers, children with ODD are more likely to have difficulties with academic performance, and may engage in risky behaviors including criminal activities and substance use. Without intervention, children with ODD are more likely to develop other problems including a conduct disorder, which involves a range of behaviors including destruction of property, aggression towards people and animals, lying, stealing, and serious violation of rules.

What can we do about it?

- **Confirm diagnosis with a thorough evaluation**
 - Obtain behavioral checklists from caregiver and teacher (see resources below)
 - Rule out other causes (e.g., learning or language disorder, medical problem or medication side effect, depression, anxiety, trauma)
 - Evaluate for co-existing conditions, including attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, mood disorders (depression, bipolar disorder) and anxiety disorders.
- **Specific clinical strategies include:**
 - Educate parents, teachers, and the child or adolescent about ODD
 - Teach parents how to give effective praise and establish consequences for inappropriate behavior. Emphasize the importance of immediate reinforcement and consistent punishment.
 - Help parents and caregivers formulate a reward system that is meaningful for the student and useful for parents and teachers. Show them how to evaluate reinforcers in terms of their value to the child or adolescent; convey the on-going nature of this assessment process. Actively involve children and adolescents in developing the reward system.
 - Define the utility of “time out” for children and “grounding” for adolescents. Explain how both methods help prevent the “punishment spiral” from recurrent child misbehavior.
 - Provide feedback to caregivers and teachers by using daily report cards.

Helpful Forms and Handouts

- **National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality** offers free toolkits for professionals, including Vanderbilt Rating Scales www.nichq.org/nichq
- **AACAP Facts for Families:**
http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families
 - *Oppositional Defiant Disorder:*
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/72.htm>.
 - *Conduct Disorder:* <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/conduct.htm>.
 - *Violent Behavior:* <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/behavior.htm>.
- **National Mental Health Association.** *Fact Sheet on Conduct Disorder:*
<http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/74.cfm>.
- **Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder in Children and Adolescents: Diagnoses and Treatment** by Dr. Jim Chandler:
http://jamesdaunchandler.tripod.com/ODD_CD/oddcdpamphlet.pdf
- **The Mayo Clinic** discusses everything from the definition of ODD to lifestyle and home remedies to help change behaviors association with the disorder.
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/oppositional-defiant-disorder/DS00630>

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*