

# Parent Fact Sheet

## Self-Injury

### ***What is Self-Injury?***

Self-injury occurs when an individual deliberately harms themselves as a way of coping with psychological distress. Although difficult to understand, for some people this behavior becomes a coping mechanism. Feelings of anxiety, emotional numbness or disconnection, and a need for self-punishment are among the reasons individuals report engaging in self-injury.

### ***Why do they do it?***

Research has not clearly defined all of the factors that lead to self-injury. Some individuals come from loving homes, while others may have experienced sexual or physical abuse, invalidation, or struggles related to identity. What is consistent across the research is that self-injury is often used as a way to relieve extremely uncomfortable emotions.

### ***What do I do now?***

- Take a deep breath. This is difficult, but it is better that you know about it.
- Remember you cannot solve the problem alone, but you can connect your child with help.
- Access professional support. Find a qualified mental health professional and make an appointment as soon as possible.
- Do NOT tell your child to simply stop. This rarely works and can increase frustration.
- Do remove readily available items for cutting, but be aware that your child may find alternatives.
- Do address any injuries promptly and seek professional medical care when needed.
- Do provide a listening ear. Create an accepting, supportive atmosphere when your child wants to talk.
- Do help coordinate a safety plan with your child's mental health professional and the school's support staff.
- Do keep the school informed about changes in your child's intervention plan and overall well-being.