

# MINDS ACT TOOLKIT

2022



**Save the Children**  
Action Network™

#INVESTINKIDS



# MINDS IN MAY

Dear Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) Volunteer,

Every child, no matter where they live, deserves to live a safe, happy and healthy life. Being mentally healthy is no exception.

In recent weeks, we've not only watched the conflict in Ukraine continue to impact more and more people across Eastern Europe, but we've also passed both the 7th anniversary of the war in Yemen and the 11th anniversary of the war in Syria. Globally, 452 million children live in areas affected by conflict and more than 14 percent of them are estimated to have a mental health disorder. We know that violence, hunger, illness and loss of education are the immediate and visible effects of conflict, all of which affect children's mental health – which is often overlooked as a largely invisible problem.

Mental Health Awareness Month provides us with a critical platform to tell our lawmakers to prioritize mental health and psychosocial support for children and caregivers around the world.



## In this Toolkit, you will find:

1. Information about the MINDS Act and mental health and psychosocial support.
2. How to join the SCAN community in our collective actions.
3. How to amplify your message online.

# SOME BASICS ON MENTAL HEALTH, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS) AND THE MINDS ACT



## The Problem:

Despite the fact that millions of children desperately need treatment and support, less than 1 percent of funding on global health goes to address their mental health and well-being. While the US government does finance MHPSS in its foreign assistance, there is no official government commitment or approach, no reporting on how the U.S. is addressing mental

health and psychosocial needs and no inter-agency coordination process. With an estimated 452 million children living in conflict zones, it is essential for mental health and psychosocial support to be adequately financed, mainstreamed and prioritized to respond to the spectrum of children's needs.

## Why It Matters:

Mental health is crucial to a child's physical and intellectual growth and development. Strong mental health and psychosocial supports at a young age lay a vital foundation for their education and ability to cope with challenges later in life.

By investing in children's mental health and psychosocial well-being, we are investing in the global community – its brighter future and long-term success.

## The Solution:

We need improved humanitarian policies and funding to support the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children impacted by conflict. That's why the MINDS Act is so important – it puts mental health at the forefront of the discussion, and sheds light on mental illness affects millions of children worldwide.

The Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings (MINDS) Act is the first-ever piece of legislation that would promote mental health and psychosocial support as a key component of U.S. foreign assistance. It will support best practices in the

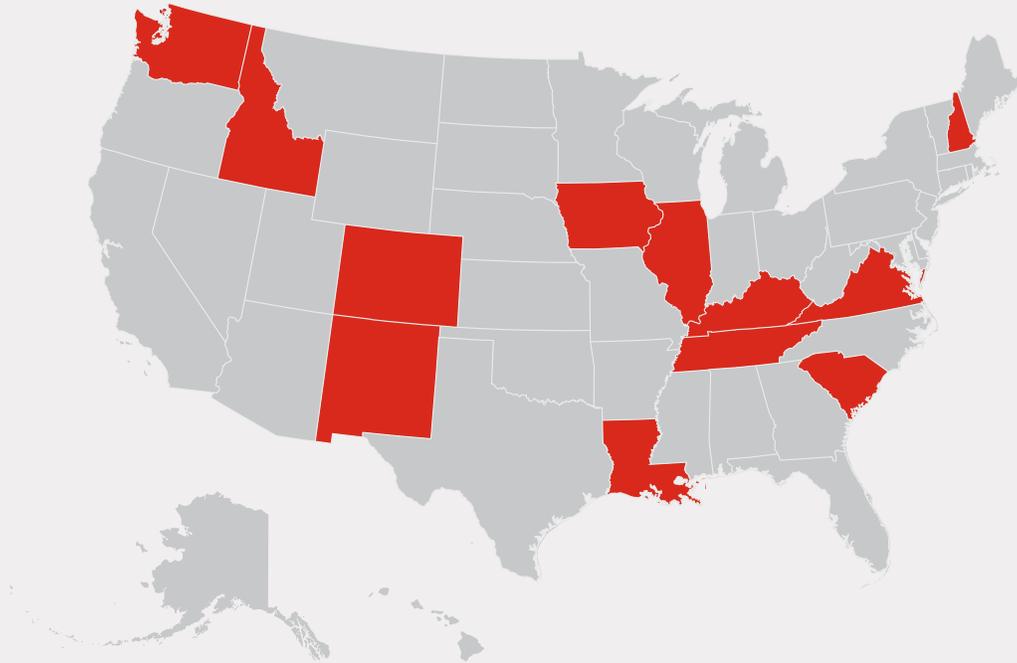
field of mental health, lay the groundwork for a global mental health strategy and emphasize the needs of at-risk populations such as children, women and girls.

The MINDS Act is bipartisan, and has been introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. In the House, it's been introduced by Representatives Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Joe Wilson (R-SC). In the Senate, it's been introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA).

# TAKE ACTION

## The Basics:

1. Not sure who represents you?  
You can look it up at [Members of the United States Congress - GovTrack.us](#)
2. Check out their websites to find their phone number, email, addresses and social media handles.
3. Contact your SCAN State Manager to let them know about your advocacy and join the community of advocates in your area.



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# TAKE ACTION CONTINUED

## Call Your Member of Congress

Here's a good script to follow when you make a call or leave a message:

“Hello,

I am a constituent calling to express my support for the prioritization of mental health and psychosocial support within U.S. foreign assistance through the Mental Health in International Humanitarian Settings –or MINDS Act. It is the first-ever piece of legislation that would promote these issues and this support is desperately needed right now. Globally, 452 million children live in areas affected by conflict and more than 14 percent of them are estimated to have a mental health disorder. Despite these millions of children needing treatment and support, less than 1 percent of funding on global health funding goes to address their mental health and wellbeing.

I am calling to urge [lawmaker's name] to support the bi-partisan MINDS Act (S.2105 or H.R. 3988) that will support best practices in the field of mental health, lay the groundwork for a global mental health strategy and emphasize the needs of at-risk populations such as children and women.”

### Tips for a Successful Call

1. If someone picks up your call, it won't be your Member of Congress – it'll be a staff member who will take down your message and relay it to your Senator or Representative.
2. You don't have to be an expert! The staff will listen to your “ask,” thank you for calling and ask for your address.
3. Express that you are a constituent who is passionate about helping kids!
4. Be brief and polite. The staff member speaking with you receives many phone calls each day.
5. Let your State Manager know that you made the call and raise any questions the staffer might have had on the phone.

## Write a Mother's Day Letter to your Member of Congress

While you're writing your Mother's Day notes to the important women in your life (May 7th – don't forget!), write an extra one to your Member of Congress urging them to co-sponsor the MINDS Act. You can say something like:

Dear [Member of Congress],

I'm writing to express my support for the bi-partisan MINDS Act (S. 2105 or H.R. 3988).

As global conflicts worsen, I'm devastated to see millions of children experience grief, anxiety and depression. But as Mother's Day approaches, I'm also thinking about the suffering that parents endure.

When crisis strikes, fear, stress and uncertainty can prevent caregivers from providing the protection, stability and nurturing their children need during emergencies.

In fact, it's estimated that as many as 23% of children live with a caregiver who has a mental health disorder. This can disrupt the child's healing process and impact their emotional and physical development long-term.

Without strong psychosocial assistance, these families will struggle to heal. As an advocate for parents and children in need, I urge you to co-sponsor the MINDS Act to support their mental health and well-being.

### Tips for a Successful Letter to Congress

1. Start with your legislative “ask”. Tell them what you want your elected officials to do.
2. Keep it simple and short- no longer than one page!
3. Make it personal by including a sentence about why you care about kids' mental health.
4. Always include your address so their office knows you are a constituent and knows where to send a response.

# TAKE ACTION CONTINUED

## Get Published (Letters to the Editor)

Writing an LTE for your local or regional newspaper is a great way to get the attention of your elected officials and reach a large audience in your community. Elected officials' staff monitor their local newspapers every day and track the mood and views of voters.

To the Editor:

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to shed light on the importance of mental health and wellbeing. As a society, we must better prioritize mental health, especially that of children.

Unfortunately, there are millions of children around the world in desperate need of mental health and psychosocial support. 452 million children live in areas affected by conflict, with more than 14 percent of children worldwide estimated to have a mental health disorder.

Just think of the children in Ukraine – or those who have fled. How are they possibly coping with the trauma they've experienced?

As a [PARENT/TEACHER/STUDENT/ETC.] I know how important a role mental health plays in a child's healthy growth, development and future success.

That's why I'm so supportive of the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings (MINDS) Act. This first-of-its-kind legislation would promote mental health and psychosocial support as a key component of U.S. foreign assistance.

This Mental Health Awareness Month, join me and Save the Children Action Network in urging [NAME OF POLICYMAKER] to support this bipartisan legislation. The futures of millions of children are at risk. By investing in children's mental health and psychosocial well-being, we are investing in the global community – its brighter future and long-term success.

[NAME]

[CITY]

### Tips for a Successful Letter to the Editor

1. Keep it between 150-250 words long.
2. Include a personal story that demonstrates why you're passionate about the issue.
3. Make an "ask" to your Members of Congress, in this case: co-sponsoring the MINDS Act.
4. Many newspapers have submission forms on their website.
5. Ask for support! You can reach out to your State Manager to support you every step of the way: writing, editing, submitting and more!

## Lobby Your Members of Congress

Work with your State Manager to set up a meeting with you elected Members of Congress during Mental Health Awareness Month. They'll put you in touch with other advocates interested in lobbying, help set up a meeting and prep the team beforehand.

## Amplify Your MINDS Messages

While you're taking actions, grab your SCAN t-shirt and take a quick photo or video. Share your actions on social media – and don't forget to tag your Members of Congress! Use the hashtag #InvestInKids in your posts.

