



August 18th SOC Meeting at 1 p.m.

In very basic terms, friendships are “vital for human survival and health, heavily impacting longevity, mental wellness, and stress reduction”. The APA has reported that **lacking these social connections can be “as harmful to your body as smoking 15 cigarettes a day”.**

We as providers know however that friendships can be very complicated. There can be many ups and downs, feelings of isolation, bullying, cyber bullying, and more. This often leads to depression, substance use, poor academic performance/attendance and suicide. **Youth who have been bullied are 3.5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to peers who are not bullied.**

In August the SOC is recognizing National Friendship Day. More information about this can be found at: <https://kidskonnnect.com/articles/friendship-day-activities/>. The August SOC meeting will focus on the importance of kids building healthy relationships and empowering them with what to do if bullying happens. **The SOC will be welcoming as its featured presentation, Bethany McClanahan with NAMI Missouri.** The information shared will equip us as providers, parents, anyone invested in the well-being of children with what is needed to help them successfully navigate social relationships. Furthermore, these skills are critical for successful relationships later in life and can have a profound impact on overall health.

This will be a powerful presentation that you won’t want to miss, especially with a new school year underway. All are welcome! Please reach out to me (Jennifer) at Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov if you need an invitation! If scheduling permits, there may be a second presentation from a noted National expert on the issue of bullying.