

# Maine Resilience Building Network: The Mattering Initiative



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## How is MRBN using the latest science to start conversations and shift systems?

Mattering is strongly linked to the protective factor of social connectedness, recognized by the US CDC's National Center on Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion as one of the five priority social determinants of health that can impact health and health equity.

For youth, the CDC indicates, "Connectedness refers to a sense of being cared for, supported, and belonging, and can be centered on feeling connected to school, family, or other important people and organizations in their lives. Youth who feel connected at school and home are less likely to experience negative health outcomes related to sexual risk, substance use, violence, and mental health." (CDC, 2020)

In recent CDC findings published in *Pediatrics* (Steiner, 2019) youth who feel connected at school and at home were up to 66% less likely to experience risk behaviors related to sexual health, substance use, violence, and mental health in adulthood.

The Maine Resilience Building Network (MRBN) launched *Cultivating Mattering for Maine Youth* in response to data and research that makes a compelling case for community involvement in promoting mental health and well-being among young people. Mattering is a protective factor for mental health issues and diseases of despair, including substance use disorder, anxiety, and depression.

The state of Maine uses Mattering as one measure of well-being in the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. In the most recent survey, taken in 2019, 41% of middle school students and 43% of high school students said they don't feel they matter in their communities. In the same survey, 20% of middle schoolers and 16% of high schoolers said they have seriously considered suicide.

According to the 2019 National Survey of Children's Health, Maine has the nation's highest rate of children with diagnosed anxiety disorders, and the third highest rate of children with diagnosed depression. Increasing Youth Mattering is a primary prevention strategy that benefits families, communities, employers, and Maine's overall economy.

MRBN serves as a catalyst, working across the public and private sectors to support community-developed approaches to increasing this crucial protective factor. MRBN has made a long-term commitment to supporting community-level work by convening Thought Leader Roundtables and Community Conversations, conducting ongoing outreach and education to stakeholder groups, and developing and sharing tools and resources.

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## Mattering has the power to transform.

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The essence of Mattering is the belief that you are seen, heard, and valued by others. It's more than being included or fitting in – it's feeling that you are contributing in a meaningful way. Others depend on you. Your absence would have an impact. At home, at work, at school, and in your community.

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