Practice Note:

Being Alert to Indicators of Psychosocial and Mental Health Problems*

No one should be overzealous in seeing normal variations in student's development and behavior as problems. At the same time, school professionals don't want to ignore indicators of significant problems. The following are meant only to sensitize responsible professionals. They should not be seen as a check list. If a student is of significant concern, a request should be made to an appropriate person on the school staff who can do some further screening/assessment. If they occur frequently and in a variety of situations and appear rather serious when you compare the behavior with other students the same age the following behaviors may be symptomatic of significant problems.

**Emotional appearance**
(Emotions seem excessive. Displays little affect. Very rapid shifts in emotional state.)

very unhappy, sad, teary, depressed,
very afraid
  (fearful indicates a sense of worthlessness)
can't seem to control emotions
hopelessness / helplessness
very anxious
shy doesn't seem to have feelings

**Personal Actions**
(Acts in ways that are troublesome or troubling)

very immature often doesn't seem to hear
frequent outbursts/temper tantrums, violent
hurts self, self-abusive
often angry
easily becomes overexcited
cruel to animals
truancy, school avoidance
sleep problems and/or nightmares
trouble learning and performing
wetting/soiling at school
eating problems
easily distracted
sets fires
impulsive
ritualistic behavior
steals
seizures
lies often
isolates self from others
cheats often

**Interactions with others**
(Doesn't seem interested in others. Can't interact appropriately or effectively with others.)
doesn't pay attention
refuses to talk
cruel and bullying
promiscuous
highly manipulative
excessively reactive and resistant to authority
alienates others
highly aggressive to others -physically, sexually
has no friends

**Indicators of Unusual Thinking**
(Has difficulty concentrating. May express very strange thoughts and ideas.)

worries a lot
preoccupied with death
doesn't stay focused on matters
seems to hear or see things, delusional
can't seem to concentrate on much

*Additional indicators for problems (such as depression in young people) are available through a variety of resources -- see Resource aid packet on Resource Materials and Assistance - Downloadable at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu*