

Supporting the Mental Health of Students in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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December 14, 2021



National Mental Health Data, Adolescents 12-17, Past Year, 2020

- Major depressive episode (MDE) - 17% (4.1 million people)
- Co-occurring MDE and SUD - 2.7% (644,000 people)
- Serious thoughts of suicide - 12.% (3.0 million people)
- Suicide plan - 5.3% (1.3 million people)
- Suicide attempt - 2.5% (629,000 people)
- Received mental health services - 17.3% (4.2 million people)
- Adolescents with a past year MDE more likely to report COVID-19 negatively affected their mental health “quite a bit or a lot” during the 4th Quarter of 2020

SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health

New York State High School Students

In the previous 12 months before the survey, students...

- Felt sad or hopeless: 35.1%
- Seriously considered suicide: 17.3%
- Attempted suicide: 8.5%
- Suicide attempt treated by a doctor or nurse : 3.1%

2019 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey



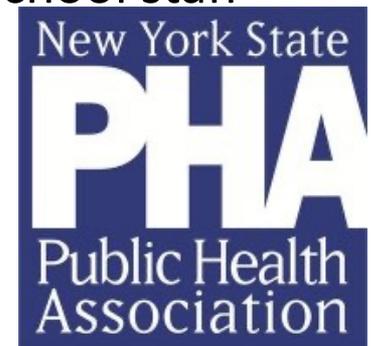
Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health

- Temporary or permanent business closure
- Overwhelming job loss and economic stress
- Social isolation
- Disruption of routines, activities, and coping mechanisms
- Increase in domestic violence and trauma
- Reduced access to community and religious support
- Barriers to mental health treatment
- Untreated medical problems
- Anxiety from 24/7 news coverage
 - Discussions of systemic racism, racist violence, disparities
- Increases in firearm sales



Impact of Virtual Schooling

- Kids with little social interaction and variable educational structure
- Parents having to take time off work or being less productive
- Disparities in access to services
- Lack of access to clubs, sports, and other activities
- Variable home environments
 - schools less able to identify and report
- Schools play a key role in supporting students, families, school staff
 - Health care system not fully equipped to support youth and their families



Creating a Positive School Environment

- Learn about the backgrounds and experiences of families
- Ensure students have equitable access to the materials and equipment they need
- Build relationships with students – ensure they have one caring adult
- Celebrate positive moments and events
- Empower students to take care of themselves and others
 - Both physical and mental health
- Give students factual information when asked



Creating a Positive School Environment

- Build strong, healthy relationships
 - Positive rather than punitive discipline (i.e., mindfulness moment rooms)
- Create a sense of belonging
- Share common purpose and ideals
- Provide service opportunities
- Provide opportunities for autonomy and leadership
- Involve students and families in decision-making
 - Listen to family voice (i.e., social media, town halls, surveys)



Help Students Build Resilience

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs
 - Identify specific stressors
 - Determine what students normally do when faced by stress
 - Brainstorm alternative ways to respond
 - Develop and maintain coping skills



Support Student and Staff Mental Health

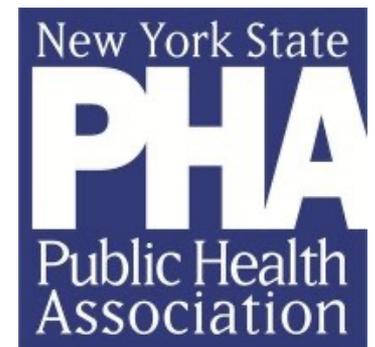
- Mental health awareness
- Develop protocols for identifying mental health concerns and connecting to care (screening, intervention, and referral)
- Explore school-based health and mental health clinics
- Provide training to teachers, other school staff, and mental health counselors
- Address the culture around mental health help-seeking
 - Sources of Strength
- Share resources
 - Crisis Text Line, Trevor Project, local resources



Mental Health and Trauma Training

- Trauma
 - Neurobiology of trauma and toxic stress and how to recognize it in students
“acting out” can signal trauma – it’s important to know how to respond
 - Handle with Care – model for law enforcement to notify schools if they encounter a child
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)
- Sources of Strength
- Signs of Suicide
- Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
- Act on FACTS - Making Educators Partners
- Safety Planning Intervention

All interventions using a Multi-tiered System of Support



Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking or writing about killing oneself
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Violent or rebellious behavior
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Personality change
- Giving away prized possessions
- Depression, anxiety, loss of interest, irritability, humiliation, shame, agitation, or anger
- Doing worse in school



Pay Attention to New or Uncharacteristic Behavior

- “I don’t know how much longer I can take this”
- “They will be sorry once I’m gone”
- “I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up”
- “I’ve been saving up my parents’ pills in case things get really bad”



Take Action if You're Concerned about a Colleague

- Ask openly and directly if they are thinking about suicide
- Ask them to tell you about what has been going on and LISTEN to them
- Avoid discussing the value of life, minimizing problems, or giving advice
- Link them to additional resources, let them know it is important to get help, and stay with them while exploring options



BHWorks for Schools

- School and district-wide screening of students for behavioral health and safety risks, using computers and mobile devices
- Workflows are configured in the system
 - Manage interventions in-house based on score
 - Connect students with community-based services and resources and communicate through HIPAA-compliant messaging system
- Track prevalence across school, district, and state
- Evaluate the program and report out
- Michigan and Pennsylvania have adopted bhworks statewide
- <https://mdlogix.com/for-schools/>



A Few More Tips

- Support staff mental health
- Understand and respond to grief
- Promote mindfulness and self-care
- Re-establish routines and connections both in school and at home



Resources

- Back to School After COVID-19: Supporting Student and Staff Mental Health
 - <https://mhttcnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/B2S%20Toolkit%20-%20Print%20Ready3.pdf>
- NYS School Mental Health Resource and Training Center
 - <https://www.mentalhealthdnys.org/>
- NYS Center for School Health Learning Management System
 - ACEs and Trauma-Informed Care in Schools
 - Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools
 - Suicide Prevention
 - <https://www.schoolhealthny.com/domain/142>
- Free online trauma training from the Mental Health Technology Transfer Network
 - <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/products-resources-catalog?keyword=C-TLC>
- Handle with Care
 - <http://handlewithcarewv.org/>
- JED High School
 - <https://jedfoundation.org/our-work/jed-high-school/>
- bhworks for schools
 - <https://mdlogix.com/for-schools/>

Resources

- Act on Facts – Making Educators Partners online training modules –
 - <http://sptsuniversity.org/login/index.php>
- Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
 - <https://www.preventsuicideny.org/support-and-training-for-colleges-and-universities/>
- Safety Planning quick guide
 - <https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/safety-planning-guide-quick-guide-clinicians>
- Adolescent SBIRT (substance use and suicide screening and early intervention)
 - <https://sbirt.webs.com/>
- Good Behavior Game
 - <https://goodbehaviorgame.air.org/>
- Sources of Strength
 - <https://sourcesofstrength.org/>



Talk and Text Lines

- Crisis Text Line – text “Got5” to 741-741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK
 - soon to be 988
- Trevor Project
 - TrevorLifeline: 1-866-488-7386
 - TrevorText: Text Start to 678-678
 - TrevorChat: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/help>
 - TrevorSpace: <http://www.trevorspace.org/>



Questions

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