



**SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH ALLIANCE**
Redefining Health for Kids and Teens

**Listening and Learning Session: Mental Health
SBHC Primary Care and Behavioral Health Clinicians
May 21, 2020**

CHALLENGES

Over 80% of participants shared challenges related to the mental health safety of their clients, providing care, or both. Concerns about suicidality, depression, anxiety, grief, and abuse are common, as are fears that difficulties accessing and engaging clients in care will exacerbate these issues. Others reported concerns about funding and staff safety and wellbeing.

TARGET AUDIENCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA SUPPORT

A majority of participants (53%) reported targeting students for immediate mental health and trauma support. About 35% of participants are addressing SBHC and school staff needs, and 30% are including students' families and caregivers in their services. Within these categories, participants discussed focusing on established patients, high-risk youth, students with fewer resources at home, and staff over 65 or with health conditions.

IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA

(1) Adaptations to care

Participants are adjusting the way they provide care to and connect with clients and their caregivers. Clinicians discussed the importance of recognizing that meeting students on video platforms is similar to entering their home. Participants acknowledged that in both individual and group sessions, students are not always comfortable sharing a view into space that is usually private. Some students prefer only to show their faces at the beginning of the session and then direct the camera to the ceiling; other students complete the session from their closet for extra privacy. A few clinicians are using scavenger hunts and other icebreakers to help students feel more at ease with virtual clinical care. Another provides services that are non-video chat-based to ensure that students continue to receive the care they need, even if services are not billable.

A few clinicians shared that they interact with clients' caregivers in new ways. There is a heightened need to collaborate more with and stay in closer contact with caregivers, while in-person care is not available. In some instances, caregivers are involved in conducting risk assessments and checking on unreachable clients suspected of being in crisis. To meet needs, clinicians are connecting with clients' caregivers outside of traditional office hours. Participants agreed that it is particularly important to be adaptable during these times.

(2) Collaboration and Partnerships

SBHCs are leveraging partnerships to ensure that students receive the support they need. In Pennsylvania, a participant works with district-developed task forces made up of school staff and community agencies to establish best practices and protocols. This approach brings everyone together to identify needs and who can best meet them. Participants also discussed the importance of collaborating with teachers, preparing them to support the mental health of their students. Several SBHCs are providing trauma-informed virtual professional development for teachers. One clinician shared that their program trained teachers on social determinants of health and highlighted the need to prioritize relationships with students.

(3) Outreach and engagement

SBHCs and school communities are using several different approaches to maintain contact with students and families. Well-received methods to reach students include live streams and involving students and staff in TikTok challenges. In Oregon, a youth advisory council is active on social media managing peer-to-peer engagement. SBHCs are using social media, emails, and letters to reach caregivers to connect them not only with mental health services but also with other programs for food-security and technology support.

(4) Staff wellness

Beyond meeting the needs of students and their families, SBHCs are considering staff wellness. Some participants deliver programs to staff, including hosting virtual mindfulness meditations or organizing Wellness Wednesdays to share self-care and other mental health resources. Participants also shared successful initiatives districts or school climate committees are leading that SBHCs can adopt, such as virtual yoga and community building activities--such as sharing pictures of pets and trivia.

For more COVID specific information and updates for SBHCs and Alliance efforts, visit our website <https://www.sbh4all.org/resources/covid-19-resources/>.