



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

**Listening and Learning Session: Mental Health
SBHC Sponsor Organizations/Administrators
May 19, 2020**

CHALLENGES

A third of participants shared challenges related to mental health safety and providing care; many mentioned challenges of capacity, closures, and engaging families. Safety challenges include depression, anxiety, grief, homelessness, increased abuse, suicide ideation, and past and new trauma. These challenges are bolstered by decreased participation in school-based mental health care, isolation, lack of access to care, and difficulties establishing care.

TARGET AUDIENCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA SUPPORT

A majority of participants (58%) are targeting support to students with immediate mental health and trauma needs, and targeting SBHC and school staff (24%), and patient families (16%). Participants discussed targeting specific sub-populations within these groups, including special needs students, resource-limited students and families, and existing mental health clients.

IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA

(1) Training and capacity building

SBHCs are training support staff to respond to mental health and trauma, building clinicians' capacities in collaboration with community partners, and increasing the number of appropriate professionals trained to identify and respond to suicide ideation. One district shared a list with mental health clinicians of signs of abuse and safety concerns to look for during video calls with students.

Two specific training platforms named during the Listening and Learning session are Kognito and The National Alliance On Mental Illness' (NAMI) Ending the Silence. Kognito hosts interactive online trainings focused on various mental health issues; SBHCs in Arizona use a specific suite of trainings called "At-Risk" among elementary, middle, and high school staff. A Kognito license includes access to progress reports and pre- and post-tests, and many of the trainings are 45 minutes. A local NAMI affiliate in Arizona adapted in-person evidence-based trainings for use online. These trainings target school staff, parents, and students, and focus on reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and trauma.

(2) Collaboration and partnerships

SBHCs are increasing communication and strengthening partnerships with academic counselors, hospital systems, community-based organizations, and school administrators to continue reaching youth with services. In Rhode Island, a registered nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, and principal convene for weekly wellness meetings to discuss students currently receiving mental health services and those to target for outreach. A school district in Pennsylvania partnered with a local cable company to offer discounted and free internet to

resource-limited families to ensure that all students can access online learning and telehealth platforms. An SBHC in Montana is working with school resource officers (SROs) to conduct welfare checks on students the clinician couldn't reach. This program set up the infrastructure to share information between the health center, school staff, and local police department.

(3) Adaptations to continue delivering care

SBHC are finding creative ways to continue providing care. In Hawaii, all students have immediate telehealth access to a nurse practitioner, and this nurse practitioner can connect students to behavioral health services within their school district. An SBHC in Pennsylvania is continuing to provide social work and speech and language services through telehealth for students with individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to ensure that their education is equitable. Students who need devices to receive this care are able to keep those loaned to them through the summer. SBHCs in Montana mailed resources to the homes of students receiving therapy to increase engagement in their mental health care. Resources include worksheets and art supplies used for brainstorming, dialectical behavior therapy, and expressive arts therapy.

(4) Outreach and engagement

SBHCs are increasing outreach and engagement efforts to continue to provide care to patients. An SBHC in Alaska is focusing on streamlining the process for teachers to refer students to mental health services since teachers are often more connected with students than other school staff. Another program conducts screening calls to all patients to assess ongoing needs. Many sites are offering all resources online for students, the community, and staff, and one has been sending a newsletter to students with resources from various partners. To increase engagement in care, a provider records herself teaching a life skills lesson each week as though she were teaching in front of a class. Students watch this video at the same time and participate in a live chat discussion. Teachers serve as co-administrators to answer questions, and students can answer each other's questions, as well.

(5) Staff wellness

New York City Health and Hospitals built a multi-faceted program to support staff mental health. All staff have access to a behavioral health hotline manned by a mental health professional, as well as to webinars on topics like compassion fatigue, helping coworkers grieve the loss of coworkers, grieving the loss of loved ones, and mourning while practicing social distancing. Wellness rooms throughout the hospitals offer wellness activities, pamphlets with resources, and peers trained to provide emotional support.

Project ECHO also offers virtual support for first responders, teachers, community health workers, and early childhood staff on this website: <https://echo.unm.edu/covid-19/institute-nm>.

(6) Increased suicide risk

During the COVID-19 pandemic, those with mental health issues may be at elevated risk for suicide. Participants cited strategies, like regularly meeting with school staff, to identify and reach high-risk students and parents, and creating suicide protocols in coordination with school administrators. A district with a recent death by suicide coordinated zoom meetings with the friends and families of the individual and plans to maintain contact with those affected throughout the summer.

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