

## School Practitioner Community of Practice

(A network for sharing & exchange)

September 25, 2019

Topics for discussion –

>**About screening for problems at school**

Follow-up on a previous discussion –

>**Will the college admissions scandal hurt students with disabilities?**

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

Given the frequency of community crisis events, we urge a review of the 7/17/19 practitioner discussion of **plans for schools after a crisis event.**  
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner\(7-17-19\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner(7-17-19).pdf)

**Note:** Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other Center resources including

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is from the

**Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA**

Given education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

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For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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Topic for Discussion –

>**About screening for problems at school**

**Request from a colleague:** *I am the SEL Facilitator in my school district. We are interested in conducting universal mental health screenings in our school system. Could you direct me to resources to learn about what grades, intervals and measurement tools we might consider in implementing a screening protocol?*

**Center Response:** Let's first deal with the concept of screening. It is important to differentiate formal first level screening from the need to prevent problems and respond quickly when students are not doing well. It is essential to understand that first level screening is only meant to be a precursor to other forms of assessment.

And, formal first level screening measures are controversial, especially those used for universal mental health screening in schools. Examples of the many problems and issues are: Will the cost of screening outweigh the benefits? How many false positives will result from such large-scale

screening and will the errors be corrected? Is the school able to do follow-up the screening with valid individual assessments and ensure those in need connect with appropriate help?

Here is an excerpt from a 2017 research review:

(“Depression Screening and Health Outcomes in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review”  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743717727243>)

Depression screening is controversial.... Recommendation for screening has been criticized for relying on indirect evidence from studies of screening tool accuracy and treatment effectiveness. ... Concern has also been raised that the recommendation fails to adequately consider possible harms from screening, such as overdiagnosis and overtreatment, as well as the consumption of scarce healthcare resources in a context where people with known mental health problems struggle to obtain adequate care....

The main finding of this systematic review was that no randomized controlled trials have evaluated whether depression screening improves depression outcomes among children and adolescents...A recent systematic review found that there is no single screening tool and cutoff that can consistently identify children or adolescents with depression and rule out those without depression. The small number of studies that have been conducted on screening tools in children and adolescents suggest that many children and adolescents would be falsely identified as likely depressed by these tools, in some cases due to normal variations in mood...

Despite the lack of direct evidence in support of depression screening among children and adolescents and disagreement between current guidelines, screening programs have already been implemented in many schools....

In conclusion, recommendations for depression screening in children and adolescents are not supported by evidence from any randomized controlled trials that screening programs would improve depression outcomes. Implementation of screening programs would result in harm to some children and adolescents who are screened. They would also consume scarce healthcare resources that would thus not be available to treat youth who have mental health problems but do not obtain adequate treatment. There is particular concern about the use of resources and unintended harm that may result from the implementation of depression screening programs for children and adolescents....

Screening is not the only way to improve depression identification and care. Without evidence of benefit from screening, a better option would be to direct resources toward improving access to mental health services and ensuring that healthcare professionals are adequately trained to recognize, assess, and treat depression....”

We worry a great deal about these problems and issues and try to highlight strategies that encourage alternative ways for schools to prevent problems and identify and respond quickly when students are not doing well. For a sense of our perspective, see:

>*Screening Mental Health Problems in Schools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policyissues/mhscreeningissues.pdf>

>*Screening/Assessing Students: Indicators and Tools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/assessment/assessment.pdf>

>*Assessment in Schools: From the Perspective of Addressing Barriers to*

*Learning and Teaching* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/assessaddress.pdf>

In general, we stress that an overemphasis on screening tends to collude with tendencies to downplay the need for improving the school’s approach to promoting whole child development, and preventing and ameliorating problems by addressing a wide range of barriers to learning and teaching. See

>*Improving School Improvement*

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

Both accessible at: [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

Some have come to see assessing individuals as something to be done only after assessing the environment as a causal agent (e.g., neighborhood, family, school factors). These are

sometimes referred to as social determinants. For an example of shifting the focus from the individual to the environment, here is one doctor’s perspective.

*I diagnosed ‘abdominal pain’ when the real problem was hunger; I confused social issues with medical problems in other patients, too. I mislabeled the hopelessness of long-term unemployment as depression and the poverty that causes patients to miss pills or appointments as noncompliance. In one older patient, I mistook the inability to read for dementia. My medical training had not prepared me for this ambush of social circumstance. Real-life obstacles had an enormous impact on my patients’ lives, but because I had neither the skills nor the resources for treating them, I ignored the social context of disease altogether.*

Laura Gottlieb, M.D. in the San Francisco Chronicle.

For more on *Social Determinants of Health, Mental Health and Academic Achievement*, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/socialdeterminants.htm>

There are many resources available to guide school staff in monitoring for indications of learning, behavior, and emotional problems as part of their regular encounters with students (e.g., see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm#Assessment>). RTI is a recent iteration of such monitoring efforts (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiguide.pdf>).

For more links to resources about *screening* from the Center and a range of resources from others, see the Center’s online clearinghouse Quick Find >*Screening* – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1405\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1405_01.htm)

For more on assessing and addressing environmental factors, see the Quick Find >*Classroom Climate and Environments that Support Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>

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**Please let us know:**

**What are your views on all this?**

**Share your perspective and send any other comments to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

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**Follow-up on a previous discussion –**

**>Will the college admissions scandal hurt students with disabilities?**

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner\(7-3-19\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner(7-3-19).pdf)

From the Dallas Daily News: *Nearly 1 out of 10 students at some of the area's wealthiest high schools have a disability designation that can give them more time to take tests, including college-entrance exams. The rates are vastly greater than at high-poverty schools in North Texas, where fewer than 3 percent of students have such classifications, raising questions about what the disparity could mean in the high-stakes world of college admissions.*

*Wealthy families swept up in the "Varsity Blues" college-admissions scandal in March were alleged to have spent thousands of dollars on schemes to get their children into elite universities. That included faking disabilities so their children could get accommodations — such as extra time or even testing in a private room — on college-entrance tests...*

*The New York Times reported that high schools in the nation's wealthiest neighborhoods had more than double the national average of students designated as being on disability plans that could lead to extra accommodations.....*

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2019/08/09/kids-wealthy-schools-likely-get-disability-accommodations-give-edge-college>

## Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

About Promoting Social Emotional Development at School: "Kernels" and Natural Opportunities - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/socemotdev.pdf>

Stable Homes, Stable Schools - <https://mphonline.org/stablehomes/>

Hidden no more: How states and districts are helping K-12 homeless students - <https://ednote.ecs.org/hidden-no-more-how-states-and-districts-are-helping-k-12-homeless-students/>

Fostering Healthy Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Development in Children and Youth: A National Agenda - [https://www.nap.edu/login.php?record\\_id=25201](https://www.nap.edu/login.php?record_id=25201)

Family Centered Community Change - <https://www.aecf.org/resources/family-centered-community-change-report/>

About Peer Contagion Effects - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contagion.pdf>

How to Help Kids Deal With Embarrassment - [https://childmind.org/article/help-kids-deal-embarrassment/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=READ%20MORE&utm\\_campaign=Weekly-09-17-19](https://childmind.org/article/help-kids-deal-embarrassment/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ%20MORE&utm_campaign=Weekly-09-17-19)

## A Few Upcoming Webinars:

9/26/19 – Mental health and children

10/3/19 - Improve School Culture, Prevent Bullying

10/8/19 - You Expect Me to Do What? Clarifying Paraprofessional Roles in the Classroom

10/9/19 - Rural School Safety

10/16/19 - The Principal's Role in Social and Emotional Learning Register

10/16 – McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights

**For links to register to the above and for other relevant webinars, see**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

*Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;  
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to  
enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development,  
and enhancing school climate.*

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For information about the

**National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**  
go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

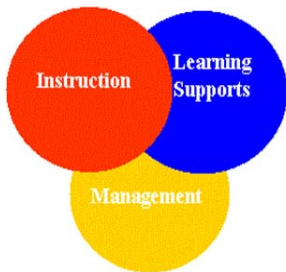
*Also online are two related free books*

**Improving School Improvement**

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

**Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide**  
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

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**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND  
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

*For new sign-ups – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)*

*Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.*

*We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange  
on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>  
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> )*