

(5/24/23) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

>**How can schools reach students who are hesitant about using school mental health resources?**

>**Summer: Can schools and communities provide students with opportunities for social and emotional growth and well-being?**

>**Children and Youth Resilience challenge**

>**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

For discussion and interchange:

>**How can schools reach students who are hesitant about using school mental health resources?**

Request from a student:

“ In our civics class, we are planning to advocate and help combat student mental health problems. We were looking to increase the amount of social workers at our schools. However, after looking at the budget, we discovered that we might not have the ability to accomplish this. Through our research we discovered that MANY students admit that they don't utilize the social workers that already exist. Due to this fact, we are thinking of reworking our goal to find a way to get more kids to access the social workers that we already have, before we try to get more.
-We found that even if we have the resources, students aren't using them, so what can be done?”

Center Comments:

Let's backup a bit and reframe the situation.

First: We hope school staff and students always are working on preventing mental health problems and providing support to all students before addressing the problems of increasing availability and access to mental health services. For more on this see:

- >**Prevention**
- >**Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Problems at School**
- >**Prevention and Schools**
- >**Resilience/Protective Factors**
- >**Protective Factors (Resiliency)**
- >**Wellness**
- >**Classroom Climate/Culture ... and Environments that Support Learning**
- >**Schools as Caring, Learning Communities**
- >**Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH**

Second: Student support staff can play a key role in preventing and addressing problems as soon as they appear by spending time in classrooms to provide special assistance, information, and resources to students. Initiating such proactive interventions can eliminate the need for many students to seek out-of-classroom services. For more on this, see

- >Chapter 13. Bringing Learning Supports into “Classrooms” in
Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

In addition, schools are finding additional ways to provide support. For example, see

- >[*Student and Learning Supports: Increasing Availability and Enhancing Student Access and Use*](#)
- >[*Mentoring*](#) (including peer mentoring and peer tutoring)
- >[*Cross-Age Peer Mentorship Programs in Schools*](#)
- >[*About Student Peer Mentoring*](#)
- >[*Peer Relationships, Peer Support, and Peer Counseling*](#)

Third: Students (and others) may be reluctant to seek services or talk with teachers about concerns for many reasons, such as not wanting to admit they need help, uncertainty about what will happen, worries about privacy and confidentiality, embarrassment, concern about being shamed and stigmatized, fear about being judged, expectations that nothing good will result, etc.

For the most part, general efforts to overcome the reluctance require interventions that (a) reduce perceived public stigma, (b) enhance student’s understanding of mental health problems, (c) clarify available supports, and (d) spell out the processes and benefits (minus the costs) of seeking help. Students may also be more willing if they can ask in a private way (e.g., via email). For more on this, see

- >[*Confidentiality*](#)
- >[*Stigma Reduction*](#)
- >[*Mental Health Curriculum*](#)

Fourth: It is important to recognize that all efforts that narrowly focus on adding a few more mental health *services* fall far short of meeting the needs that are present in too many schools. Given this, we stress that it is time to redirect some of the energy devoted to providing mental health services so that student/learning support staff can build a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. For more on this, see

- >[*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*](#)
- >[*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*](#)

And for more in depth presentations, see the following resources:

- >[*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*](#)
- >[*Improving School Improvement*](#)
- >[*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*](#)

Comments from the Field:

We shared this request with several colleagues. Here is some of what they suggested:

1. “It’s GREAT to hear about students with such noble aspirations! I encourage these students to begin with a clear objective or goal. For example, if the goal is to increase the numbers of students using available resources, what are the current numbers of students seeking the help of social workers? Have these numbers increased or decreased over time? What happened before Covid? During Covid? After?

Then research more:

Talk with fellow students to learn about the reasons for not using these resources. Naturally,

they must be careful to ensure that individuals are not singled out or that responses can be identifiable to one individual. Perhaps these students can think of a creative way to solicit anonymous responses to a few questions electronically.

Then talk with social workers and school counselors to learn what issues have come to the forefront for students who have used existing services?

This research will provide data on ‘how often’ students use the resources, ‘what’ issues are most prevalent, and ‘why’ students are not using these resources. Then I would encourage them to research just a bit more online to see how their findings compare to national trends. Here is a link to an article published last January from the National Institutes of Health:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9883078/#:~:text=Findings%20revealed%20high%20levels%20of,and%20mental%20health%20and%20wellbeing.>

Then, I encourage these students to take what they've learned and develop a multi-pronged approach with the first step being awareness building. For example, they may want to share their findings with school administration, the school board, other students, teachers and even parents. Messages should be crafted to fit a specific audience. For example, the administration and school board will want to know the numbers and comparisons made to national trends. Teachers need to know what they should do if they're worried about a student. (Google it and use trusted sources that end with .gov or .edu.) Students need to know they're not alone and how to ask for help. Their friends need to know what to do if they're worried. And parents need to know what to look for. The options for communication are endless!

Once you engage your community, you can begin to address the BIG reasons (1 or 2) that students don't currently use these resources. Once you find out "why", you may be able to do something about it.

Still another prong in this approach should look at school policies related to mental health. Are there policies and practices that prevent or inhibit students from accessing services. Even simple things like the hours these services are available. Develop a plan to address these and get them changed.

Yet another prong could be things put in place to make it easier for students to talk with social workers. Maybe virtual appointments? Maybe an electronic board to post questions? This is only limited by your imagination.

Overall, educate yourself to the details of what is actually happening and back it up with data. Once you look into the problem, the underlying issues will be more apparent.

These students are always welcome to connect with me if that would be helpful. Thanks for asking.”

2. “First of all, mental health is a positive term that all human beings have the ability to support. Think about how much our own lives have demonstrated resilience often due to people in our lives to care about us and listen and support us in our goals and projects and ideas and dreams. So the first thing to remember is that good connections to good people are the first line of defense for mental health promotion for all. Then we have to think about how to reach our schools with ideas of how both adults and students can campaign for mental health promotion. like a connection campaign of some sort. And finally schools can partner with mental health professionals who might be willing to come to campus to see students who need therapy. If a school can be a positive place where students can talk with adults and teachers and know that they are there to help, so many mental health issues will be mitigated without stigmatizing others. The best remedy is how to create a school that supports mental health and well being for all. To do that, means all hands on deck and a vision to keep a positive focus for well being on each campus going long after a class ends. This is my life’s work and we need more like you who want to make these kinds of things happen for long term sustainability.”

For discussion and interchange:

>Summer: Can schools and communities provide students with opportunities for social and emotional growth and well-being?

With summer coming, schools and communities are concerned about how to provide and engage youngsters in productive activities. Research shows the importance and value of providing extracurricular activities. Here's an excerpt from a relevant article:

From: *Extracurricular activities and adjustment among students at disadvantaged high schools: The mediating role of peer relatedness and school belonging*

"...Self-determination theory recognizes the existence of basic psychological needs defined as "essential nutrients for growth, wholeness, and well-being". Of these, the need for peer relatedness is considered crucial. It is defined as the need to feel meaningfully connected to others.... Several studies have shown that peer relatedness allows individuals to achieve higher levels of well-being and psychological health. This need is central also in adolescence. Key aspects of development at this age (e.g., identity, autonomy) depend on the development of positive interpersonal relationships. These relationships allow adolescents to learn about themselves and how to fit in a group. ...

Extracurricular activities participation provides students with opportunities to strengthen their existing social relationships, in addition to meeting new people. On the one hand, these activities allow adolescents to spend more time with peers outside of school hours, which could help maintain and deepen social relationships at school. On the other hand, they provide an additional context in which students get to know new people and develop social relationships based on shared interests and values...

Schools should offer a broad array of extracurricular activities to tap the interests of as many students as possible (e.g., sports, civic involvement, arts, technology). In this connection, to offer all adolescents the same opportunity for participation, it is essential also to offer activities free of charge or at low cost. In addition, high school stakeholders would benefit from identifying and implementing strategies to promote the extracurricular activities offered at their school (e.g., class tours, information booths, direct solicitation). By doing so, they might reach students who are not usually inclined to participate in such activities...."

\$1 million Children and Youth Resilience Challenge announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

This first-ever Children and Youth Resilience Challenge will fund innovative community-led solutions to promote resilience in children and adolescents, birth to age 24. The Resilience Challenge will fund community-led solutions that:

- >Promote resilience and advance mental health and well-being
- >Reduce the risk for negative mental health outcomes among children and youth
- >Promote positive strategies and solutions that help children and youth thrive
- >Identify and elevate promising practices that promote culturally and linguistically responsive protective factors

"To help children and adolescents thrive and live their healthiest lives possible, we have to break down silos," said Assistant Secretary for Health ADM Rachel L. Levine. "This Resilience Challenge will help find and fund innovative community-led strategies that can support their mental health needs."

"We know that many look to family and cultural traditions that build resiliency. Communities, including youth themselves, are developing and delivering innovative and creative solutions to promote resilience in children and young adults," said Assistant Secretary for Children and Families January Contreras. "Our intention is that this investment leads to more community-generated solutions to promote the mental health and well-being of children and youth."

The Resilience Challenge will include a proposal phase and a pilot phase for selected finalists. Proposals are due Friday, July 7, 2023.

For more information about the Challenge and how to submit a proposal, please visit

<https://www.challenge.gov/?challenge=resilience>

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*For more on resilience from our Center and from others, see the Center's Quick Find
Resilience/protective factors*

Here are two Center resources listed there.

>*Protective Factors/Resilience*

>*About Resilience and Schools*

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>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Stigma and Young People Whose Parents Use Substances

*A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies Exploring Lived Experiences, Perceived Impact,
and Coping Strategies of Children and Young People Whose Parents Use Substances*

A Governor's Guide to Children's Cabinets

*The impact of parental substance use disorder and other family-related problems on school
related outcomes*

Building Student Resilience Toolkit

Closing the Opportunity Gap for Young Children

*An economist spent decades saying money wouldn't help schools. Now his research suggests
otherwise*

Students are increasingly refusing to go to school. It's becoming a mental health crisis

*California's Major Investment in Universal Transitional Kindergarten: What Districts Need
to Fulfill Its Promise*

Newcomer Education in California

These 5 best practices can help schools make the most of social media

**Making Visible the Prevalence of Self-identified Disability
Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

"... the intersection of disability and homelessness, particularly intellectual, developmental, and learning disabilities for youth experiencing homelessness.... Given the unacceptable number of homeless youth, research efforts are examining the intersections of youth homelessness with institutional systems such as child welfare, criminal justice and education with a view to preventing youth homelessness by addressing service gaps that result in youth exiting these systems into homelessness...."

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10530789.2021.1940719>

To paraphrase Goethe:

Not moving forward is a step backward.

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

5/24 Culturally responsive practice
5/24 Be Well: Centering mental health in schools
5/26 Helping youth on the path to employment
5/31 Framing Youth Mental Health
6/6 Afterschool learning: academics or fun?
6/6 Wellness strategies
6/8 Effective psychotherapy
6/23 Youth mental health
6/28 Peer support
7/17 Mental health first aid
7/18 Building an effective team
7/24 Peer perspective

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**
- **Looking for information?** (We usually can help.)
- **Have a suggestion for improving our efforts?** (We welcome your feedback.)

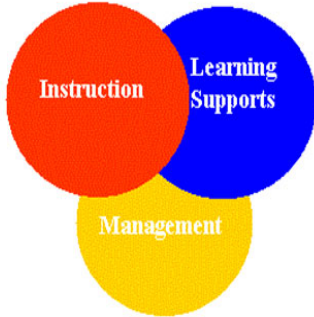
We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Are you in a lousy mood today?

Yes, and I don't want anyone to ruin it!





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

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
promoting whole child development, advancing social justice,
and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

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

For new sign-ups – email 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/>)