
Safe Schools and Mental Health: More of the Same or an Opportunity to Really Improve Schools

Testimony at the Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS) meeting on July 11, 2018, once more demonstrated the prevalence of limited thinking about mental health in schools. As is too often the case, the policy focus was on “serious emotional disturbance.” Testimony focused on “improving access to mental health treatment.”

A child psychiatrist’s testimony stated: “Through my work in schools, I have come to appreciate the importance of promoting the mental health and well-being of students through the school system. By providing these services in schools, we have an opportunity to decrease stigma associated with seeking mental health care, and we also can decrease many of the barriers to getting students help when they need it.” She referenced the value of the “Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), ranging from universal interventions for all students, indicated interventions for some students, and to actual diagnosis and treatment for few students in school settings.” And cited PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports), Life Skills Training (LST), and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools. Her recommendations were: (1) Expand the mental health workforce in schools. (2) Provide training and technical assistance for school based clinicians. (3) Assure that all stakeholders in the school environment are equipped to understand and support the social and emotional development of children.

Nothing new about any of this, and the sad truth is that more of the same is a recipe for ongoing system failure.

For those approaching safe schools as a mental health concern, it is *Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools*.

So see the brief straight talk statement from the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA – online at -- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhinschools.pdf>