



**28 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



November 10, 2014

Request from a Colleague

>Introducing students and families to school MH supports

A Request from a Graduate Student in a School MH Program

>Invitation to share (via a research survey) what schools do related to eating disorders

Featured Center Resource

>Social marketing learning supports

Coming Soon

>2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

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**Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.
The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.**

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of
the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

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Request from a Colleague

"I am working to get more mental health services into the schools. This year we have Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Clinical Social Work interns working in the schools. I am looking for a sample letter to send home to families letting them know about having LMFT/LCSW and interns available. Do you have anything I could use?"

Center Response:

We always suggest using such contacts as an opportunity to think more broadly about sharing information and “social marketing” related to all the school/district is doing to provide student and learning supports. This, of course, includes a focus on mental health.

Here are some ideas about such “social marketing.”

First: See if there is a compilation highlighting the various supports (programs, services, personnel). If not, folks such as the interns might work up such a document. (For an easy format, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/listingresources.pdf> .)

Second: Talk with anyone who has responsibility for connecting with families and communities to determine the best ways to share the information – not only with families, but with staff and students. Those who work with families usually have some helpful guidelines on how to make the message inviting to families and how to keep the language easy to read. There might also be district services for translating the information into other languages for families who don’t speak English.

Third: With respect to the content, think about including the following:

- >An intro that describes the commitment to helping all students and families and inviting them to make contact when a need arises.
- >Highlight all the regularly offered student and learning supports (enclose a listing).
- >Highlight the special opportunity (“This year we have several interns joining us. This enables us to broaden our focus to include programs for promoting healthy development and preventing and correcting problems.”) Provide info about what the interns will provide (e.g., counseling, classroom supports, transitions support for new students and families, support groups, etc.).
- >Offer a contact number should they have any questions.

Four: Other outreach:

- >Consider a special open house (specify a date) for "meeting our student and learning support staff" (including the new interns) or include such a meeting as part of already scheduled open houses or other events (such as PTA meetings or other times families are invited to school).
- >Prepare a flyer/brochure that can be given to all newcomers and for circulation at all events.
- >Convey the info using all available school-home communication vehicles (e.g., website, email, newsletters).

Consultant Responses

We asked some colleagues what they would recommend; here are two responses we received.

(1) "I would be reluctant to provide any guidance on this, in our state the different professionals being referenced in this email are all licensed by state regulatory Boards. Thus, they may have limitations on the services they provide and what they can "advertise" as part of their internships. I would encourage her to talk with those professionals and inquire about the process they have to follow for providing services as part of their internships. It's a technical issue, but you wouldn't want to create a situation that could potentially result in a discipline complaint against the intern."

(2) "An interesting problem. My first reaction is 'why introduce mental health services with a letter?' People have so many misconceptions about mental health services. I would expect an unexpected letter to generate a fair number of negative responses ranging from 'that's a family matter—none of the school's business' to 'big government trying to tell me I can't spank a misbehaving child.' Simply having LMFT & LCSW interns 'available' doesn't tell me what these people know how to do or when to ask them for assistance. The MH program needs to have a clear focus and be thoughtfully integrated with other systems already functioning within the schools. I'm hoping a LOT of time has been spent doing a needs assessment in the schools to find out what services are needed, and who is already working on those problems. Otherwise you run the risk of students being assigned to therapy because some third party thinks that student has a mental health problem. Also you can disenfranchise people who are already doing mental health and create 'turf battles'. I can also imagine some complicated confidentiality rules and legal liability issues that need to be sorted out before letters home go out. Maybe doing the resources mapping and then leading stakeholder discussions is a good first task for the intern LMFTs & LCSWs. Once the school and the families in the neighborhood agree that X needs to be done by Y in Z manner, then we can draft a clear letter that respects the traditions and culture of the families regarding mental health issues and services. By that point, most folks should be aware of the MH program from all of that start-up work, and the letter would be more of a 'reminder' than a 'first introduction.' There was a time when the model was for the school psychologist to provide both mental health and educational assessment services. But schools never hired enough school psychs to cover just the basic special education testing, much less any other services. So then we started looking to local mental health centers putting offices in the school buildings, or bringing in social workers, resulting in a patch-work of various professionals working in semi-isolation from each other. I think it's essential that the program be well thought-out regarding services and coordination across the various school programs before the advertising goes out. [For an example, see <http://achieve.lausd.net/Page/1316>]

I like the way LAUSD starts off by explaining the belief system underpinning the mental health services. Simon Sinek has some interesting materials suggesting that people will 'buy' when they agree with the underlying values of the other person. Once that connection of sameness is made, people will listen to the logical reasons and facts that support taking some particular action.... With all that Big Data we have now, we might even be able to make different versions of the letter keyed to different neighborhoods. One thing I would advise against in a cold call type letter is a lot of

technical terminology. The mental health people are comfortable talking about ‘traumatic experiences’ and ‘resiliency’, but a large number of the general population is not, I fear. (At least LAUSD quickly notes ‘...the ability to bounce back from challenges with a stronger sense of self-confidence...’) A big barrier to effective MH services for years is the stigma that comes from not understanding, and I’ve always wondered why schools don’t do more to explain individual differences in a way that normalizes those differences. An accepting attitude can do a lot to build an accepting climate, which then makes it easier for people to seek help and not completely freak out when somebody exhibits a symptom of a mental health condition. In recent years we have seen some heartwarming media that show people with Down syndrome in a favorable light. It would be nice if schools had time/money/will to get people together to find out everybody has some kind of struggle and it’s not helpful to demonize this group or that characteristic... Wouldn’t it be great if schools could put the emphasis on how best can a student fit in rather than labeling and segregating people who do not fit in?... So, with all that in mind, I recommend that a LOT of groundwork precede the broadcasting of a letter introducing the availability of some mental health interns.”

Listserv Participants:

What are your thoughts about all this? Are you aware of schools sending out information letters? What are schools doing about social marketing student and learning supports? Share so we can help others learn. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Requst from a Graduate Student in a School MH Program

This graduate student is reaching out to survey and document what schools do related to eating disorders. See the following request:

“Dear School Mental Health Professional,

You are invited to participate in an anonymous survey to provide your perspectives on the inclusion of eating disorder services in school mental health, including barriers and recommendations. Your participation involves answering questions about your current position, populations you serve, knowledge and training in eating disorders, and your previous experiences with youth with eating disorders. Additionally, you will be asked to note your perspectives and suggestions on integrating disordered eating and school mental health services in schools. By completing the survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study. It should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. You can contact me at Schiele@email.sc.edu

You may access the survey through the link below:
https://acsurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_000nYGNXI3GieEJ

Thank you very much for your help!”

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Featured Center Resource **Social marketing learning supports**

Social marketing is an important tool for enhancing the status of student and learning supports, including mental health in schools. This form of marketing draws on concepts developed for commercial marketing. But in the context of schools, we are not talking about selling products. We are trying to build support for the importance of the work. See

>*Social Marketing as a Spiraling Facet of Program and Systemic Change*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/socmark.pdf>

With respect to the above requests, mapping to share what a school is doing is an essential facet of social marketing. Here are two tools for pulling together information to share:

>*An Aid for Initial Listing of Current Resources Used at a School for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/listingresources.pdf>

>*Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>

Coming Soon

Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System

This new book is being prepared by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, co-directors of a national Center at UCLA. To facilitate efforts to transform student and learning supports, the resource will be placed on the Center's website for free and easy access in January.

The work outlines what is involved in designing and implementing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable learning supports component to replace the existing fragmented and disorganized set of student and learning supports. With respect to cost, the emphasis is mainly on redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.

2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

Much of our work in recent years was accomplished as part of the national initiative for New Directions for Student and Learning Supports. As of now, this initiative is being morphed into the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*.

The book cited above will be the keystone for this initiative. To further help districts and schools make the transformation, the Center will be developing additional online, free resources – including professional development activities, powerpoints, implementation resources, and a revised System Change Toolkit. We also will continue providing online technical assistance and coaching.

Watch for it!

***Please share relevant resources ideas, requests,
comments, and experiences!***

Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

**Note: Responses come only to the
Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA for
possible inclusion in the next week's message.**

**We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the
Net Exchange on our website at**

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>

and to *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

For Recent Previous Postings, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>