



**30 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



April 18, 2016

Concern from a High School Student:

- >About needing parental consent to seek MH help**
 - Center Response

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

For Your Information

- >School staff job uncertainty and student harm**

Featured Set of Center Resources:

- >Staff burnout**

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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**

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

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Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*,* this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed. The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Concern from a High School Student: “My friend and I have been working to find a way to implement mental health screening at our high school without parental consent. Your organization came up as a group that is knowledgeable in consent laws and mental health resources for youth. Most of the kids we know suffering from mental health issues are unable to get support from their parents and are not taken seriously. We thought that, if an adult determined during an organized screening that their child needed to seek further professional help, that parents would take their kids more seriously. The problem is that it is unlikely that their parents, already not seeing their children's concerns as valid, would sign off to have their kids screened. I was curious as to whether or not it would be legal for high school kids to consent to a mental health screening. It would consist of a written form evaluating current risk factors (divorce, family death, etc.) and then a mental health screening test for youth administered by a district approved adult. I was also wondering about the liabilities of what we do with the information. I believed it would be okay to simply hand the results back to the students, but my principal has expressed some concerns. Any clarification or answers you have to offer would be greatly appreciated. Thank you!”

Center Response: **First of all:** any student who is “suffering from mental health issues” can and should reach out to school staff for help. Usually, this involves contacting any of the following: a school’s psychologist, counselor, nurse, social worker, teacher, principal, etc. Such requests will be taken seriously, and appropriate steps toward help usually will be initiated quickly.

With respect to involving parents, take a look at our Center resource entitled:

> *Enlisting Appropriate Parental Cooperation and Involvement in Children's Mental Health Treatment* –

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/29_enlisting_appropriate_parental_cooperation_and_involvement.pdf

With respect to the specific questions about consent, here are links to some national organizations that can provide information about the matter:

> American Bar Association Children and the Law –

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law.html

> Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law – <http://www.bazelon.org/>

> National Center for Youth Law – <http://youthlaw.org/>

Also, consult state information on consent. For example, since this request came from California, these are examples of what a state may provide:

> California Minor Consent Chart –

<http://www.teenhealthlaw.org/fileadmin/teenhealth/teenhealthrights/ca/CaMinorConsentConfChartFull11-11.pdf>

> Minor Consent and Confidentiality Toolkit Module –

http://www.teenhealthlaw.org/mental_health/

Designed for busy adolescent health providers, updates and additions in this new edition include: updated legal information; added resources for youth; a new section for parents/guardians, and information addressing issues of HIPAA and FERPA.

> Family Code – <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=fam&group=06001-07000&file=6920-6929>

Now, about mental health screening in schools: We always urge caution about schools getting involved in *first level screening*. To understand why caution is essential, see our recent resource entitled:

> *Thinking Cautiously About Screening for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) in Adolescents: The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations and Implications for Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/depress.pdf>

Focusing on the whole business of mental health screening in schools, we also have a general brief entitled:

>Screening Mental Health Problems in Schools – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policyissues/mhscreeningissues.pdf>

For more on first level screening of mental health problems, see the Center’s Quick Find on:

>Assessment & Screening – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1405_01.htm

There are alternatives to pressing schools to add a *formal* mental health screening program. These include using the time ad resources to (a) enhance student, parental, and school staff understanding about mental health problems and (b) improve the school’s student and learning supports. For example:

(a) Use the school newspaper and other communication venues to provide a series of articles on common mental health concerns experienced by high school students. Include a list of resources for further learning and contacts for accessing help. Ensure distribution to all students, school staff, and parents. For resources in preparing such articles, see

>*Typical and Troubled* – <http://www.americanpsychiatricfoundation.org/what-we-do/public-education/typical-or-troubled/about-typical-or-troubled>

>*Raising Teens* – http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/pdfs/raising_teens_report.pdf

Also, everyone also should be informed about available **Hotlines** (see the list the Center has compiled – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hotline.htm>)

For more resources on mental health education, see the Center’s Quick Finds on

>*Parent Education* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2103_02.htm

>*Fact Sheets Related to MH in Schools and Addressing Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/factsheets.htm>

>*Mental Health Curriculum* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2311_01.htm

>*Mental Health Disorders in Children* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/emotdist.htm>

(b) Map and do an analyses of available student and learning supports to clarify why students’ problems are not being effectively addressed by the school. Then present the findings to the school’s administrators, teachers, and support staff and ask that a workgroup be established to develop an effective system. (See the aid the Center uses to map student and learning supports –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>)

Our position is that schools must always strive to do more than identify problems. They must have an intervention system in place to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems in ways that enhance equity of opportunity for success at school and beyond. Such a system includes pursuing changes in the school environment that create unhappy students (and staff) as well as providing a comprehensive set of student and learning supports.

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Invitation to listserv participants: *What’s your take on all this?* Clearly, students are concerned about mental health and family support. What actions do you advise? Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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For Your Information:

>School staff job uncertainty and student harm

We consistently hear of teacher shortages in many places. Therefore, it is both an ironic and sad situation that, at this time of year, some teachers and school staff around the country are receiving RIF (Reduction in Force) notices. RIF notices warn that staff members may soon lose their jobs. In some districts, the annual ordeal is expected, but in all cases, the impact on staff morale and students is a problem.

See news article from New Jersey:

>*Outcry continues over Trenton school layoffs, cuts* (3/23/16)

http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2016/03/outcry_continues_over_trenton_school_layoffs_cuts.html

“Every year, employees in Trenton NJ Public Schools worry whether they will be next on the chopping block in the face of yet another budget crisis. Last year, Trenton Public Schools was faced with a \$17.3 million shortfall. This year it was \$5.9 million, and each time, programs have to be cut and employees let go. Under the \$299 million budget that was approved this week, pink slips will be going out to dozens of teachers, paraprofessionals and secretaries and entire child study teams will be eliminated in favor of a private agency... Though 41 positions are being added, 205 are being cut, resulting in a net loss of 164 jobs, but the unions and their supporters say they're not giving up without a fight.... Among the latest victims of the budget cuts are counselors, speech, occupational and physical therapists, resource teachers and 92 paraprofessionals who work with special education students....”

Katharine Strunk, at the University of Southern California, has researched the impact the threat of teacher layoffs. Her analyses are based on six years of detailed panel data, including four years of teacher layoffs, from the Los Angeles Unified School District. A summary of her work notes that:

“She finds strong evidence that the receipt of a Reduction in Force (RIF) notice increases the likelihood that teachers will leave their schools, even if the teacher is not ultimately laid off. She also finds that teachers who were laid off and then returned to the district in the following year were less productive, according to value-added measures of effectiveness. After testing for various alternative explanations, she concludes that these negative consequences are produced by both the structural shuffling of teachers that result from the layoff process and the uncertainty and job insecurity for teachers that is associated with the layoff process itself.”

<http://edpolicyinca.org/events/how-threat-teacher-layoffs-affects-teachers-evidence-los-angeles-unified-school-district>

This points to the need for countering the negative impact. Minimally, it seems districts have a responsibility for providing support processes for those receiving such notices. In addition, steps need to be taken to ensure fairness and balance in whatever reductions are finalized. See

>*Balancing Cut-backs at Schools is Essential to Ensuring Equity of Opportunity*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/cut-backs.pdf>

If you are working on matters related to this set of concerns and have suggestions for others, please let us know. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources

>Staff Burnout

Layoff threats are only one of the stressors that have a negative impact on school staff. Stressors that lead to burnout are a major fact of school life.

When school staff don't feel good about themselves, it is unlikely they will be effective in making students feel good about themselves.

For a range of resources from our Center and from others that focus on supporting and energizing teachers and all other school staff, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Burnout* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm>

Here are two Center resources that are included on the Quick Find:

>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout* --

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/burnout/burn1.pdf>

Addresses sources and symptoms of burnout; identifies ways to reduce environmental stressors, increase personal capability, and enhance social support to prevent burnout.

>*School Staff Burnout* –

<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/schoolstaffburnout.pdf>

*For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports, see

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

>**Of Note:** Boaz (AL.) City Schools' 3 Year Strategic Plan for Improvement emphasizes development of a comprehensive system of learning supports. This plan is aligned with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and AdvancED Standards and Recommendations (AE).

http://www.boazk12.org/departments/general_administration_and_student_support/strategic_planning

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BECOMES!

Send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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