

## **School Practitioner Community of Practice**

(A network for sharing & exchange)

**August 15, 2018**

**Discussion of: About community agencies working with schools to address mental health problems**

**Links to some Center resources on the topic:**

- > *Collaboration: School, community, interagency*
- > *Integrating Mental Health in Schools: Schools, School-Based Centers, and Community Programs Working Together*
- > *School-community alliances enhance mental health services*
- > *Strategies to develop mental health models in schools*
- > *Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools*
- > *Embedding Mental Health into a Learning Supports Component: An Essential Step for the Field to Take Now*

**Invitation to listserv participants to share perspectives**

**Learning from students:**

- > *What a sample of at risk students say they need from schools*
- > *What elementary students are looking forward to in the new school year*

**Links to a few resources on other topics of concern**

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

## Discussion topic for exchange

### >About community agencies working with schools to address mental health problems

One of the responses to the school shootings of the past year has been an increased focus on mental health in schools. This provides an impetus for school and district owned student support personnel to strengthen their programs for prevention and early intervention. It also presents opportunities to find the most effective ways to work with community resources to fill gaps and to follow up on referrals for students with serious and pervasive problems.

We recently received the following request from a community mental health provider about working with schools.

*"I am a program manager for behavioral health services: children and youth services. We are in the beginning stages of putting together a proposal to integrate behavioral health services on to school campuses. One of my first tasks is conducting key informant interviews with school based providers who can describe implementation and how it works in different kinds of areas.*

*Specifically:*

- >In an ideal world, what would clinical staff be doing on or off the school campus?*
- >Are there logistical issues that we should be aware of and how were they overcome? In previous projects, we struggled to get consent forms returned which in turn became a barrier to delivering timely services.*
- >What has worked well and what hasn't worked well?*
- >Is there a specific modality that is being utilized Are groups or individual services a better fit?*
- >Do you have further recommendations about how to move forward with the proposed project?*

*I really appreciate any assistance you are able to provide.*

**Center Response:** Learning from what has been tried is a great first step. For a range of resources related to the above, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find –

*>Collaboration: School, community, interagency – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm)*

The Center resource that most directly addresses the matter is

*>Integrating Mental Health in Schools: Schools, School-Based Centers, and Community Programs Working Together – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/integratingbrief.pdf>*

Here is a brief excerpt:

“...All who work in or with schools know that the demand for services and programs outstrips resources almost as soon as they are introduced at the school site. Where schools are lucky enough to have partnerships with community agencies, valuable new assistance is available. To use these and existing resources most effectively, however, there is a need for thoughtful plans for weaving them together with school programs and personnel...

Enhancing mental health services for all students in the school involves

- Coordination and integration among all programs at the school
- Expanding the range of school based and school linked intervention options

These objectives are only possible through establishment of a close working relationship with school staff who are responsible for psychosocial programs. In many schools, there are a range of prevention and corrective activities oriented to students' needs and problems.

Some programs are provided through a school district, others are carried out at or linked to targeted schools. The interventions may be offered to all students in a school, to those in specified grades, to those identified as ‘at risk’, and/or to those in need of compensatory education and treatment. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms or as ‘pull out’ programs. The focus may be on prevention of violence,

pregnancy, dropout, substance abuse, and so forth. Finding the best match between the student's needs and available options is a first step. Creating new options for unmet student needs is the second step....

Coordination between agency and school programs to improve effectiveness requires:

- cooperative working relationships to integrate (and expand) programs/services
- integrated monitoring or individual student's care and related problem solving in ways that appropriately account for confidentiality.

Once good coordination is established, it is time to focus on expanding the range of available intervention options with a view to comprehensive and integrated activity. Such a focus includes intervention to both correct existing problems and prevent future problems.

That is,

- service options to increase the likelihood of a good intervention match for a particular student using procedures that are no more intrusive and restrictive than is essential
- prevention and positive mental health programs
- activities designed to improve the school's psychosocial climate.

To accomplish all this some agency staff may need to design their roles to create time for working intensively with others at the school. This has the potential to enhance results for a great many more youngsters....

Agencies that successfully integrate with other school programs negotiate agreements with relevant school personnel and facilitate specific ways the agency and school programs work to complement each other and expand what is available for students. Agency and school staff will find among their ranks a wide range of expertise. Accounting for this expertise is an invaluable way for agency and school staff to appreciate each other and build positive working relationships for the benefit of students and their families.

Examples of four key areas for immediate collaboration are:

- (1) resource mapping and establishment of an integrated referral system
- (2) providing staff development with respect to prereferral interventions
- (3) creating guidelines that protect confidentiality, while still allowing for productive communication between the family and school staff
- (4) teaming with the family and key school and community staff to enhance resource use....

It is sometimes hard for an agency to integrate with a school in a coordinated way if there is no common meeting ground. A Learning Support Leadership Team provides a vehicle for building working relationships. Where such a team has been created, it has been instrumental in integrating the agency into the school's ongoing life. The team can work on 'turf' and operational problems, develop plans to ensure a coordinated set of services, and generally improve the school's focus on mental health. The following guidelines have been used in establishing such a team:

- Start by surveying key school staff to identify existing school based psychosocial programs and who operates them
- Invite key people from school, center and community to a meeting to discuss how the various psychosocial programs interface with each other.
- Identify a school administrator who will be the official liaison for the agency.
- Plan to meet on a regular basis to work through coordination and integration problems with a long term goal of increasing resources available....

***Note to Agency partners: Why School-owned Student Support Staff are So Important***

A major goal of school and community collaboration is to increase the resources available to meet the mission of schools....This positive intent is steadily being undermined as some policy makers have come to the mistaken view that community agency services can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. And, with budget tightening, school administrators and school boards are making the difficult decision about what to cut based on this erroneous conclusion. This set of circumstances has led to an increased trend toward reducing school owned student support staff and

contracting with community agencies for specific services.

Unfortunately, this short-sighted budget slashing strategy not only reduces the amount of student support needed by teachers and schools, it also counters school improvement efforts designed to reframe support programs, services, and infrastructure into a potent and invaluable system of learning supports that is fully integrated with the school's educational mission.

By themselves, the type of clinical services community agencies can bring to schools are an insufficient strategy for dealing with the biggest problems confronting schools. Clinically oriented services are only one facet of any effort to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports. These are not criticisms of the services per se. It is simply the fact that such services do too little to address the range of factors that cause poor academic performance, dropouts, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, racial conflict, and so forth.

The trend to contract for specific support services ignores the following crucial reasons school owned student support staff are so important:

- Direct services for the discrete problems of a small number of students are only a small part of what a school and district need in terms of learning supports (including ways to address mental health and psychosocial concerns).
- School-owned student support staff are meant to address the needs of all students and the school at large. To these ends, they pursue development of a full continuum of interventions and related infrastructure, using the sparse resources community agencies can offer to fill gaps in the continuum.
- Without the full continuum of student/learning support interventions, school improvement efforts are unlikely to effectively counter behavior problems, close the achievement gap, reduce dropouts (students and teachers), and promote personal and social well being for the many.

The need is for school-community collaborations that can evolve comprehensive, integrated approaches by complementing and enhancing what each sector does best. Such approaches do more than can be accomplished by a few contracted community services. They address a wide array of the most prevalent barriers to learning – the ones that parents and teachers know are the major factors interfering with the progress of the majority of students.

By coordinating and integrating with each other and with community resources, school personnel can enhance the mental health of increasing numbers of students. The success of efforts to integrate school and community resources depends on a variety of factors -- a clear policy vision of why integrated efforts are important, leadership and a critical mass of committed colleagues, mechanisms and processes that can overcome challenges to collaboration, time to plan, support at each step of the way, appropriate accountability. It is not an easy process, but the rewards for all involved can be great. These can include greater intervention effectiveness and a strengthened sense of community. And, the success of such efforts should help schools see the integral part mental health programs can play in reducing barriers to learning, and this should contribute to greater support and acceptance of the programs.”

#### **A Few Other Resources Relevant to the Topic**

**>School-community alliances enhance mental health services**

[http://pdkintl.org/noindex/NASP-articles/57pdk\\_96\\_4.pdf](http://pdkintl.org/noindex/NASP-articles/57pdk_96_4.pdf)

**>Strategies to develop mental health models in schools**

<https://ct.counseling.org/2018/03/five-strategies-develop-mental-health-models-schools/>

**>Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools**

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

**>Embedding Mental Health into a Learning Supports Component: An Essential Step for the Field to Take Now** <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/embeddingmh.pdf>

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**Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives**  
**What can you share about school and community collaboration?**  
**What produces the best outcomes for the school and all the students?**

Send your responses to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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## Learning from students

### (1) What a sample of at risk students say they need from schools

Excerpt from: **“School definitely failed me, the system failed me”**: Identifying opportunities to impact educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740918300392>

The stressors of child maltreatment, homelessness, residential insecurity, and educational challenges often intersect, and vulnerable children and youth may face more than one of these challenges throughout their development.... In school settings, children and youth in the child welfare system and those who experience homelessness have increased risk of absenteeism, grade retention, behavioral challenges, and expulsion...

Despite federal policies' recent attention to challenges faced by children and youth in these systems, youth continue to experience negative outcomes. Educational setbacks and barriers to academic success represent a failure across the systems of child welfare, homeless services, and education. Little empirical evidence exists that explores these challenges from a cross-system framework....

Even though homeless and highly mobile children and youth are at risk for adverse educational outcomes, there is evidence of resilience and protective factors at play. Protective factors for youth who experience homelessness include good cognitive skills and executive functioning, quality parental involvement, peer support and teacher support, and participation in school based activities....

Youth shared perspectives about their own experiences within and across multiple systems. ... Even though all youth in the sample experienced educational challenges, many identified at least one adult who was a consistent source of support. Examples included teachers, counselors, principals, shelter staff, or former foster parents. One youth described her relationships within the school community, including with peers and staff, as “closest thing I had to family, you know.” Additionally, several participants talked about the role of these supportive adults in helping them stay in school, regulate their emotions, and ultimately make better choices:

*“I would actually go to either the teacher, or I'd actually go to the guidance counselor. Then I would just tell them what was going on, and they would basically talk to me for the whole time, just to calm me down...”*

One youth identified that these caring adults helped her build healthy social skills that she would need throughout her development, stating:

*“There was the one art teacher and like a resource room teacher...I guess like gave me their - let me use them as a stepping stone, you know what I'm saying, for not just other things, like doing things at school but for just humanity in general, those skills that I need to work out with people.”*

The experiences of these cross-systems youth highlight the need for young people to have an adult advocate, an adult who knows and cares about them – someone who will fight for them like they were their own child. In making recommendations, participants expressed that adults, particularly those in the education system, should not give up on them:

*“I would say it's every teacher in that school's responsibility to do that [to support students].*

*They are the program. They are the support system. I wish I had been... told 'I will not allow you to fail,'...”*

Schools can be an important source of support for highly mobile students, and recent studies show the positive impact of supportive teachers on academic performance and attitudes toward school....

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## (2) What some elementary students are looking forward to in the new school year

Excerpt from: *Kids talk about what they are looking forward to when they get back to school*  
[https://www.nj.com/hunterdon-county-democrat/index.ssf/2018/06/kids\\_talk\\_about\\_what\\_they\\_are\\_looking\\_for\\_ward\\_to\\_w.html](https://www.nj.com/hunterdon-county-democrat/index.ssf/2018/06/kids_talk_about_what_they_are_looking_for_ward_to_w.html)

- >“I am looking for many things during the next school year. First, I am looking to be more independent. At the intermediate school, you do not walk in any lines but, you walk to your next class without lines. Next, I am looking forward to learning about different things. I like learning about math and reading and I will learn more about them when I go to fifth grade. Last, I will be making a lot of new friends. All of the kids from all of the other elementary schools will all come to the intermediate school. I think that next year will be a great year, and I am looking forward to many things.”
- >“Next school year, I am looking forward to being able to talk in the hallways, have a locker, and just in general experience a new school. I also am looking forward to being able to share food and sit wherever I want at lunchtime. I am looking forward to these things because I have never ever been allowed to do those things or been allowed to have those things. I am very, very, VERY excited for next school year and what it brings. I hope that I have fun!”
- >“I don't really like school but I feel middle school will get me to like school because there are more things you can do in middle school like clubs, and after school activities.”
- >“The thing I'm looking forward to next year is middle school. I am finally going to have a locker, switch classes, and the best part is less rules. I also think we're going to do more fun classroom activities. I am also joyful about having more than one teacher.”

### Links to a few resources on other topics of concern

#### >*A Framework for Safe Successful Schools*

[https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Framework%20for%20Safe%20and%20Successful%20School%20Environments\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Framework%20for%20Safe%20and%20Successful%20School%20Environments_FINAL_0.pdf)

#### >*Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs*

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/251193.pdf>

#### >*School-based Health & Medical-legal Partnerships*

<http://www.sbh4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/School-Based-Health-and-Medical-Legal-Partnership.pdf>

#### >*Principal Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2016-17 Principal Follow-up Survey*

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018066>

#### >*Recognizing and Responding to Mood Problems in the Classroom*

<https://smh-assist.ca/learn/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/04/Recognizing-and-Responding-to-Anxiety-in-the-Classroom.pdf>



Take a couple of minutes to view the new free book:

#### *Improving School Improvement*

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

*If you missed the following, you can access them and more from the Center's homepage –*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

**>The quarterly ejournal for Summer 2018.**

Excerpts from a new, free book.

Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm>

Contents:

Part I: Good Schools and Classrooms

Part II: Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance

Part III: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Part IV. Moving Forward

**>The August *ENEWS*' discussion of:**

*Ways to proactively address regular concerns that arise over the school year*

**Also the 2017 free book on:**

*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom & Schoolwide*

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

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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>

**Recent publication related to the initiative:**

*>Transforming Student and Learning Supports:*

*Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System –*

<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.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/>)**