



**Mental Health in Schools
Practitioner Listserv**



A Weekly Forum for Sharing and Interchange

November 16, 2009

Requests from Colleagues:

- >**School staff need support**
- >**Expanding school based mental health and substance abuse services**

Request for your input:

- >**Survey targeted to mental health services providers who work in schools**

#####

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 smhp@ucla.edu

#####

While the two requests we received focus on different needs, our response has some common messages, as well as specific resources related to each.

Request #1: “It is the teachers that need some support. Where do we send them? I am a schools nurse and sometimes I am at a loss as to what to do with personnel who need real help.”

Request #2. “I am expanding school based mental health/substance abuse and co-occurring services and integrating services with health care professionals. Primary objectives are: (a) Improve primary prevention, (b) Reduce teen pregnancy, (c) Reduce sexually transmitted diseases in teens, (d) Reduce mental health and co-occurring problems in teens, (e) Reduce SA-co occurring problems in teens, (f) Increase responsible decision making and decrease risk taking behaviors, (g) Increase graduation rates, (h) Increase school attendance.

I would greatly appreciate any assistance ..., including references for best practices.”

Center Response: Clearly, teachers, students, families, and other staff need a supportive environment and sometime some specific services. However, perhaps the first question is not: "where do we send them?" or how do we expand “services?”.

The first concern in most schools should be for developing a comprehensive and cohesive system of supports for the interconnected concerns confronting students, their families, and staff. While each specific topic is important, we have found that the key to effective interventions in schools involves integrating resources (within a school, a district, and with the community) so that all at a school get the right help and get it at the time they need it.

This is not the responsibility of any one person; it takes the commitment of many. School nurses and other support staff are in a good position to pull together all the support personnel to plan ways to move forward with developing such a system.

To this end, we recommend starting by looking at the following resources:

- > “Infrastructure: Is What We Have What We Need?” A tool outlining a four step process that can be used by planners and decision makers to map and analyze current infrastructure. –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20infrastructure.pdf>
- > Mapping existing school and community resources –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2312_06.htm
- > Toolkit for building a comprehensive system –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

With specific reference to Request #1 – need to help teachers (and other staff) who have become “stressed out” – here are a few immediate resources:

>For a broad perspective, see the discussion of workplace stress by the American Federation of Teachers <http://www.aft.org/topics/health-safety/downloads/Stress.pdf>

Here is an excerpt related to "Strategies for Combating Job Stress"

(1) “To combat job stress, remember:

- >> Job stress has multiple causes, so it has to have multiple solutions.
- >> Interventions with the individual worker alone will not solve the problems of workplace stress. Organizational change also must occur.

(2) A well-designed stress reduction program addresses three levels:

- >> Individual: These strategies are designed to help the individual employee cope more effectively with stress (for example: change in diet, exercise, assertiveness training, relaxation training).
- >> Small groups: These strategies are intended to help workers develop more social support on the job and at home (for example, supervisory training, family counseling, team building, sensitivity training around racism and sexism).
- >> Organizational/Structural: These strategies are directed toward improving the conditions of work (for example, modifying shifts, reducing physical hazards, improving career ladders, training on technology, job rotation and employee decision-making).

(3) Suggestions to Individuals on How to Manage Personal Stress

- > Make a list of your expectations and how you plan to meet them.
- > Rank and prioritize your problems. Take one problem at a time.
- > Discuss concerns and problems with friends and people you trust.
- > Exercise regularly and get enough sleep.

- > Balance your day by prioritizing your tasks in the morning.
- > During your work break, try to do the opposite of whatever you do at work. For example, if you sit all day, stand for a bit.
- > Know when you have too much to do and ask for help.
- > Share responsibilities with others. Can co-workers or others take over some of your tasks?
- > Learn about the various relaxation methods available to help you ease your daily tensions.
- > Seek professional help when appropriate.”

>In addition, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on **Burnout**
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm>

Listserv Participants: What have you found most helpful in developing a systemic approach that can enhance support for the staff at schools? Let us know.
Ltaylor@ucla.edu

With specific reference to Request #2, here are links to resources that address the objectives listed (and others). They are from the topic menu for our online clearinghouse Quick Finds. Each provides links to materials compiled by our Center, Links to other online resources, and links to Centers that focus on the specific topic.

- >Empirically supported interventions – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/ests.htm>
- >Dropout Prevention – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html>
- >Prevention for students at risk – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/prevention.html>
- >Resilience/protective factors – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/resilience.html>
- >Substance Abuse – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3001_03.htm
- >Teen Pregnancy – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3005_02.htm
- >Youth Development – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/youthdev.htm>

Listserv Participants: What would you recommend to community colleagues who want to expand a school’s impact on mental health and substance abuse concerns? How would you suggest a link with school and district resources? school and community resources? Let us know. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

#####

Request for your Input:

>Survey targeted to mental health services providers who work in schools

“I am conducting a survey as part of my doctoral work. The survey is targeted to mental health services providers who work in schools or consult with schools in the development of mental health behavioral health services programs. The intent of the survey is to determine knowledge of best practices and standards as they pertain to school-based/linked mental health services for children and youth, their self-perceived

preparation and ability to implement these best practices, and their willingness to do so in the settings they work/consult in. The survey also seeks to determine perceptions of the schools/districts knowledge of best practices, and their willingness to enable the practitioner to implement these services and where the school/district is in terms of actually implementing and supporting practitioners. The link to the survey is http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=JxymyCGQZRPST_2b0WYHiEzg_3d_3d

If you would like to take the survey but can't access it through the above url, contact Annette Johnson at amj02@health.state.ny.us “

#####

Please send in your ideas, requests, comments and experiences relevant to providing mental health in schools 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>

#####

Looking forward to hearing from you.