

**School Practitioner Community of Practice**  
(A network for sharing & exchange)  
(1/19/22)

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- >About “mental health lay workers” in schools
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(Scroll down to read about the above and for hotlinks to resources)

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

This resource is from the  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

*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>

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**For discussion and interchange:**

- >About “mental health lay workers” in schools

**Request from a colleague:**

As schools heighten their efforts to address mental health, we are hearing many concerns.

*Here’s one.* A colleague has asked for a discussion about “mental health lay workers working in the schools (e.g., community based behavioral health organization or community crisis team group assigning an on-campus person who is not licensed or certified in behavioral health).” To start it off, this colleague states:

Mental health lay workers are a good idea to assist in schools where there is a high need and there are not enough providers. Concerns with mental health lay workers is that school faculty/staff often view them as if they are credentialed/licensed behavioral health professionals not realizing that they often lack a college degree or if they have a degree, that it might not be in a behavioral health background, and that the mental health lay workers may not recognize their boundaries of competencies, follow a code of ethics from a professional association, or have much background and professional development in behavioral health.

This happens with liaisons who work with school social workers who may have only a high school diploma or a community based mental health lay worker who is assigned to work in the schools. A liaison may be given social worker licensed responsibilities (e.g., interviewing parents and administering parent rating scales and adaptive behavior measures) and a mental health lay worker may be doing counseling and crisis work (e.g., suicide risk assessments) - all without the course work and sometimes without adequate clinical supervision. The solution is that they need ongoing regular clinical supervision (similar to what is provided to interns), ongoing professional development, self-recognition of their boundaries of competencies, agreement to follow ethical codes (including local policies and state regulations), and upfront communication with others about their roles and boundaries of competencies as well as how others can contact their clinical supervisor (similar to what is expected of an intern).

## Center Comments:

As with regular aides, volunteers, interns, etc., mental health lay workers can be a useful added resource. But clearly, there are many matters that must be addressed. For instance:

- >What are appropriate roles and functions for such workers?
- >What training and supervision is needed and who will provide it?
- >What activities are considered outside their abilities?

Someone at the district/school must be responsible for negotiating details with any organization providing mental health lay workers (e.g., detailing roles and functions, mutual commitments, training, supervision, etc.) The results of the negotiation need capturing in a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU would specify such matters as:

- >the nature and scope of mutual commitments
- >who at each school will be responsible for the mental health lay workers (e.g., who will provide direction, supervision, evaluation)
- >what training and supervision will be involved and who will do it
- >the specific role/functions/activities designated for mental health lay workers
- >the activities designated as being outside their abilities

Some of the Center resources related to *volunteers* provide some guidelines for good practice. For example, this brief might be helpful:

- >*Volunteers are an Important Part of a System of Student and Learning Supports*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/vols.pdf>

For more from our Center and elsewhere, see the Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on

- >*Volunteers in schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>

### Is this topic being discussed in your locale?

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

## For discussion and interchange:

### >About supporting those affected by crises

In the wake of the recent disastrous fires in Colorado, the University of Colorado provided some guidelines (based on lessons learned) for those who want to help in the aftermath of crises. The following excerpt has implications for schools.

From: *9 Ways to Support a Friend or Colleague Who Lost Their Home to a Fire*  
<https://www.colorado.edu/hr/2021/12/31/9-ways-support-friend-or-colleague-who-lost-their-home-fire>

If you find yourself in a position to reach out and offer support, below are ways to offer help.

**Be a safe space for feelings.** Listen for understanding. Manage your own discomfort to avoid implicitly asking your friend to have to manage your discomfort as well as their own feelings. Resist the temptation to “offer the bright side,” which can often feel invalidating or minimizing....

**Help with debris clearing.** If you are invited and able, and local authorities clear access for your friend to sift through ashes, you can be an anchor for them as they potentially go through waves of intense emotions.... Be as prepared to work in quiet if necessary as much as you are prepared to stop everything to provide emotional support. Remember what it means to be invited to this space....

**Donate something that they love and need.** It is one thing to receive a precious warm winter jacket that makes someone feel cozy and cared for because their favorite jacket was lost, and it's another to receive boxes of used and seemingly random items that they have neither time nor space to manage. You can probably assume some things are required: money and meals. But for everything else, how can you know what they need most? Ask. If offering to purchase brand new items, do your best to fulfill for them exactly what is desired, or offer gift cards if you're uncertain.

**Offer childcare and dependent-care support.** Parents and those who have dependent-care responsibilities, say for an aging parent or a sibling with disabilities, could benefit tremendously from a few hours of uninterrupted and guilt-free time. Children may be experiencing shock, despair, and confusion, and may need affection and comfort. You can help your friend's children feel loved by taking them out for a meal and treat, play a game with them, or invite them over for arts and crafts, movie night, or a playdate or sleepover with your family. This has the extra added benefit of allowing parents to work without having their attention split between their kids and navigating other responsibilities....

**Offer to help with practical needs, like moving and cleaning.** Your friend may have to relocate multiple times before landing in a semi-permanent living arrangement, which means multiple times they're having to pack and unpack. Lend your vehicle to help with the moving process....

**Help with administrative duties.** The less enticing but often overwhelming other side of disaster and tragedy is paperwork and administration. Those who lost their homes in a fire will need to engage with insurance companies and their policies, hire contractors, deal with banks and mortgage companies, speak with lawyers, coordinate with utility companies, and replace government-issued documents at least. As part of the process of recouping losses, your friend will likely need to complete a personal property inventory, which can be a daunting and emotionally shattering task....

**Ask how you can help even if you are not local.** Your friend's neighbors or local friends may themselves be comprised if they were affected as well. Distant support can become that much more valuable as a result. If you find yourself in this position, ask directly and specifically for a list of ways you can help. You may also have your own ideas, like organizing meal or gift card donations....

**Help with language translation, as well as policy and tech translation.** If speaking, reading, and writing fluent is a metaphoric flashlight in the darkness to someone who is not fluent in English and needs now to navigate complex insurance and government policies and processes that are often English-centric. Additionally, the language that policies and laws are written is incredibly challenging to most laypeople. If you are skilled in "translating" this language, you may be able to alleviate a great overwhelm for your friend as you help them to understand their insurance policies, file paperwork and documents, and apply for eligible benefits. The same can be said for online applications or processes that might be unfamiliar for those who don't engage with electronic means of communication regularly.

**Show up for them, again and again and again. It's not too late.** Your friend may say, "I don't want to be a burden." Your job is to both respect their wishes and to remind them, again and again and again, that you are there for them. But please only say so if you are prepared to act upon that promise—and it is just that: a promise to show up. "Showing up" can mean being there physically, emotionally, and/or energetically."

For resources related to crises, see the Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on

>*Crisis Prevention and Response*  
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm)

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### ***And what are your thoughts about this?***

From: *Superintendent believes semester needs to start on time to support fire victims*  
<https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/wildfire/boulder-valley-schools-superintendent-semester-start-support-fire-victims/73-d9ccc9d1-ec6b-4639-839b-3341f9f5b1a4>

Boulder Valley School District Superintendent Dr. Rob Anderson said the damage to [the district's school] buildings is minimal, but the damage to the community is immeasurable. ...

"We've got to get our arms around our kids. This isn't about academics. We're not opening up schools on Wednesday to jump into lessons. We're opening up our schools because our community needs us," Anderson said....

About 600 students and 60 staff members have either lost their homes or had their homes damaged by the Marshall Fire.

"We'll be there for our families and kids who can make it," Anderson said. "We know not everybody can make it to school, but there's some of our families and some of our kids who truly need to be there."

With COVID and the omicron variant still out there, Anderson knows staffing classrooms may be an issue. So, central office workers will be out in schools to help.

"I'm not saying we're gonna show up on Wednesday and it's gonna be a normal day of school. It will anything other than that but they need stability," Anderson said. "They need to connect with their friends. They need to connect with their teachers."

He wants to keep the doors open because in a time of chaos, he believes families need some order. "That's what school districts do," Anderson said. "In a crisis like this, we should be there for our kids."

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### **Practitioner discussion of the topic "the volume of students needing help is overwhelming"**

In a 12/30/21 commentary, we shared the message about *Teachers seeking supports stress that the sheer number of students needing help is overwhelming*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/12-30-21.pdf>

We commented that: It has long been evident that teachers left to work alone often feel overwhelmed and unable to find the time to improve their practices.

Some schools have countered this by

- >facilitating collaboration among teachers (e.g., teaming, mentoring)
- >arranging student support staff and administrators workload so that they can be in classrooms part of the time to team with teachers who need support
- >using inservice professional development to focus on the problems of engaging and reengaging students
- >personalizing special inservice professional development for teachers who need more.

2022 must be the year when teachers are no longer expected to carry the brunt of efforts to reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps. Meeting teacher needs is essential to meeting student needs.

A colleague wrote us:

"Thank you for your work and research in supporting the world of public education. I have just read your most recent email to educators. I hear your call for needing to take more off the plates of teachers and principals and providing them more time for collaboration. This is essential. However, from a superintendent/leadership perspective, school districts are very limited in our abilities to change our local systems. We do not have enough resources to provide what you are suggesting. There needs to be a fundamental shift in how teacher work days are currently set up. Ideally teachers would have 1-2 hours a day for planning and collaboration each day or once day a week. What can we do to advocate for a different structural model in our school calendars and instructional days so teachers can truly get the support they have always needed? The current band aid approach is not working and certainly not equitable. Thanks for listening."

The teacher who initially raised the matter for discussion followed up with:

(Excerpted) "Here is my focused approach for my individual situation...."

Classroom Unit Plan: Centering Language

#### 1. Rights & Responsibilities Seating Chart

(adapted from Preventing Dropout – *What Works Clearinghouse*).

- a. Students have the right to sit at any learning pod they wish.
- b. Students have the responsibilities that comes with this right.  
Contribute to your pod's learning success for each concept taught.

(adapted from Addressing Barriers to Learning—purpose)

Contribute to your pod's Friday projects. Practice the 5 Emotional Intelligence skills  
Self-Awareness. Self-Management. Social Awareness. Relationship Skills. Responsible  
Decision-Making. (from CASEL & De-Escalate).

- c. Teacher has the right to students doing their best.

- d. Teacher has the responsibilities that come with this right. Build with students (choice—multiple sources)
- 2. Monday — Thursday Agenda
  - a. Regulation Activities (adapted from The Body Keeps the Score)
  - b. Inquiry Starter— (informed in part by Addressing Barriers to Learning)...
  - c. Mini Lesson: Identify vocabulary of standard(s) being taught. I Do direct instruction....
  - d. Provide opportunities to practice. We Do Modeling. You Do Together (inspired by Trauma Sensitive Schools and Social Justice)
  - e. Exit Tickets. You-Do Alone Rubric.... Self-Monitoring (independent or pod) (adapted from Trauma Sensitive Schools and Social Justice) . What went well. Connect to previous learning. Emotional Intelligence self-rate (include attendance self-tracker—adapted from Preventing Dropout What Works Clearinghouse)
- 3. Friday Agenda
  - Weekly Project: Poster and/or Flipgrid (inspired by Preventing Dropout *What Works Clearinghouse*)....

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### Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- About What Young People are Experiencing During the Pandemic  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/panimpact.pdf>
- Schools open learning hubs to support students  
<https://www.npr.org/2021/12/21/1063004934/extra-learning-time-is-helping-these-students-catch-up-from-covid-interruptions>
- COVID-19 CARE PACKAGE: Strategies for when you feel stretched too thin  
<https://standtogether.ucla.edu/stretched-thin>
- Structural Supports to Promote Teacher Well-being  
[https://annenbergbrown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch\\_for\\_Recovery\\_Brief\\_19.pdf](https://annenbergbrown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_19.pdf)
- How COVID-19 Ushered in a Wave of Promising Teacher Pay Reforms  
<https://edonomicslab.org/2021/12/14/a-wave-of-promising-teacher-pay-reforms/>
- 8 K-12 trends to watch in 2022 <https://www.k12dive.com/news/8-k-12-trends-to-watch-in-2022/616602/>
- 13 Predictions for K–12 and Technology in 2022  
<https://thejournal.com/articles/2022/01/05/13-predictions-for-k12-and-technology-in-2022.aspx>
- Two key predictions around special education for 2022  
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/588227-two-key-predictions-around-special-education-for-2022>
- 4 Education Policy Tools to Use in 2022  
[https://ednote.ecs.org/4-education-policy-tools-to-use-in-2022/?utm\\_source=ECS+Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=e16da1c016-Ed\\_Note\\_Daily&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1a2b00b930-e16da1c016-53599575](https://ednote.ecs.org/4-education-policy-tools-to-use-in-2022/?utm_source=ECS+Subscribers&utm_campaign=e16da1c016-Ed_Note_Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1a2b00b930-e16da1c016-53599575)
- Meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of our middle level students in the online environment <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00940771.2021.1997532>
- Systemic Social and Emotional Learning: Promoting Educational Success for All Preschool to High School Students  
[https://www.americanpsychologist-digital.org/americanpsychologist/202110/MobilePagedReplica.action?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=TXAME1220106002&utm\\_content=gtxcel&pm=2&folio=1128#pg38](https://www.americanpsychologist-digital.org/americanpsychologist/202110/MobilePagedReplica.action?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=TXAME1220106002&utm_content=gtxcel&pm=2&folio=1128#pg38)
- 10 Years of Social and Emotional Learning in U.S. School Districts  
<https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/CDI-Ten-Year-Report.pdf>
- The psychosocial school environment  
<https://mgiep.unesco.org/article/the-psychosocial-school-environment>
- Paraeducators: Growth, Diversity and a Dearth of Professional Supports  
<https://www.edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai21-490.pdf>
- The 2021 Youth Transition Report: Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities  
[https://iel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/IEL\\_YouthTransitionReport\\_2021\\_Dec13.pdf](https://iel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/IEL_YouthTransitionReport_2021_Dec13.pdf)

How to Support Kids Who Are Questioning

[https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=publ\\_ed\\_nl\\_2022-01-11&utm\\_content=cta1\\_how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning](https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=publ_ed_nl_2022-01-11&utm_content=cta1_how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning)

How to Support LGBTQ Children

[https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-lgbtq-children/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=publ\\_ed\\_nl\\_2022-01-11&utm\\_content=cta3\\_how-to-support-lgbtq-children](https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-lgbtq-children/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=publ_ed_nl_2022-01-11&utm_content=cta3_how-to-support-lgbtq-children)

**A Few Upcoming Webinars**

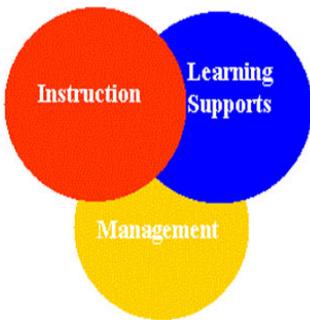
For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center’s Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 1/19 Strategies, Ideas and Lessons for Early Career Principals to be Successful
- 1/20 Stronger Together: Integrating Social and Emotional Supports in an Equity-Based MTSS
- 1/20 Understanding Special Education : IDEA - The Big Picture
- 1/20 Creating a Safe School and Community Environment for Youth
- 1/20 The Nuts & Bolts of Sustainability: Essentials for the Longevity of School Mental Health Initiatives
- 1/24 Best Practices For Youth Engagement
- 1/25 Don't Get Caught on the Chopping Block! Become Indispensable to Your School District
- 1/27 Understanding Special Education : IDEA - The Big Picture
- 1/27 Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness
- 2/3 Funding and Logistics for Collaborative, Comprehensive School Mental Health
- 2/9 How to Plan Staff Meetings that Create a Culture of Collaboration
- 2/9 Understanding Doubled-Up
- 2/22 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth

<https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fea9&e=b6757fd9d7>

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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>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

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**Invitation to Listserv Participants:**

Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.

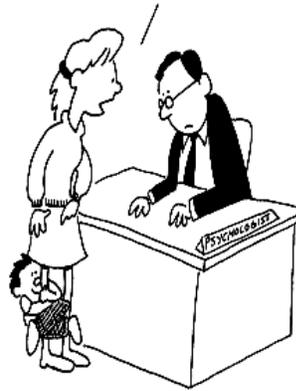
Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

MATT'S ALWAYS BOTHERING  
ME DURING CLASS.  
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HE JUST WANTS ATTENTION.  
IT'S BEST TO IGNORE HIM.



I'VE TRIED THAT. NOW HOW DO I  
GET HIM TO LET GO OF MY LEG?



**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/> )**