

(10/9/24) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

Featured

An ongoing issue for schools

>What do you think about online/telephone counseling for students?

Also of concern:

>Rethinking universal mindfulness programs in schools

And, as always:

**>Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education
(including some resources for responding to and coping with Hurricane Helene)**

**This Community of Practice Practitioner is designed
for a screen bigger than an iPhone.**

For discussion and interchange:

>What do you think about online/telephone counseling for students?

Personal computer technology has become a multifaceted intervention tool. Advanced technology offers resources for improving almost every facet of efforts to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development. Technology is expanding, exponentially.

One rapidly growing arena is “telehealth” (e.g., using online or phone interactions to teach, consult, and provide health information and care). And as AI takes hold, the possibilities for telehealth seem endless. But serious concerns have to be addressed.

What’s your view on all this? Benefits? Concerns? Let us know ltaylor@ucla.edu

Here’s some discussion material:

From a school district website:

“Student Assistance Program and TextCoach

Our Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a voluntary, short-term, bridge counseling service offered free to students in grades 6-12 for help with personal, family, or school-related concerns. We highly encourage you to seek the help of your school counselor or community counselor during the day. Need help at night or on the weekend? The SAP is available 24/7/365..

TextCoach is also available for non-pressing issues that may need common sense counseling. This is a text-based app that allows you to text with a life coach or counselor. For more on TextCoach, click here....

Textcoach® is like having a ‘Coach’ in your pocket to help you stay emotionally fit and healthy. Designed to address issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression– or to proactively build resiliency and enhance coping skills– Textcoach® allows you to work with a licensed counselor from your mobile or desktop device. Start exchanging texts today by downloading the mobile app or visiting the Textcoach...”

Letter from the Superintendent of this district to Parents/Guardians of 6-12 Students

From time to time, everyone experiences situations that affect their general well-being. Our district recognizes this and, as a result, has introduced a new Student Assistance Program to help all students be more successful at meeting their responsibilities at home and school.

Through the Student Assistance Program, which is available effective 01-01-2023, access to coaching/counseling on various topics will be available to your 6-12 grade child. You can launch services by phone and access information via a mobile app or by using the program website.

The key benefits include the following:

>No cost to the student. The service is paid for by the district.

>Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. At any time of the day or night, weekends, and over holidays, you will be able to speak with one of our professionals.

>You have access to coaching sessions in whichever modality you prefer (virtual or telephonic).

>Confidential. Although the district will receive utilization statistics on the number of people using the service, no personal, identifying information will be disclosed. No one at the district will know that you have called unless you choose to disclose this.

>Independent, impartial source of support. Your Student Assistance Program is completely independent and does not represent any organization, including the district.

The Student Assistance Program can support a wide range of school and personal issues. Some examples include: Test Anxiety, Managing stress, Grief/loss, Dealing with academic performance, Improving esteem and confidence

We hope that you will find the Student Assistance Program to be helpful.”

Research article from online counseling organization

Loneliness From the Adolescent Perspective: A Qualitative Analysis of Conversations About Loneliness Between Adolescents and Childline Counselors

“...Online counseling provides a feeling of privacy and safety for young people that is conducive to a more open and forthcoming conversation about their issues than that of face to face or telephone counseling. The anonymity and ease of access of online counseling is likely to appeal to individuals who would be reluctant to engage with traditional counseling services...”

Article providing an Overview of School-Based Telehealth Network Grant Program Services Delivered to Students in Rural Schools

“...Recognizing that school-based health care is still not reaching many students, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funded the School Based Telehealth Network Grant Program to expand telehealth in rural school-based settings to help to increase the availability and use of these services. The 19 grantees delivered telehealth to over 200 schools across 17 states, choosing which services they would deliver and how. Looking across the services, these fell into three categories – primary/urgent care, behavioral health, and other more specialized services. The majority of grantees offered multiple telehealth services with the combination of behavioral health and primary/urgent care the most common. The current study adds to the literature by elucidating that telehealth in schools can address multiple clinical conditions through separate services even though doing so involves using various combinations of clinicians providing different services.”

Discussions of the Pros and Cons

Virtual Therapy vs. In-Person Therapy

Pros And Cons Of Online Therapy: Is It Effective?

Understanding the Pros and Cons of Online Counseling

The pros and cons of virtual therapy vs. in-person therapy

Examples of how commercial entities present these services

“**Our Student Assistance Programs** meet the increased demand for student mental health services, improve student safety and keep students focused and motivated to graduation. Empowering student success with mental health support and whole person care.”

“**Online therapy for teens** – Your space to talk about what’s going on. Take the weight off your shoulders, and start feeling better today.”

We asked a range of colleagues for their views; here is a sample of responses:

1. “Well we got this for our state and it has been a help, but for the cost effectiveness. I really think its a rip off. In 3 years we serviced 48 of 10,000 students. My SBBH program services about 1000 each year for mental heath. Those 48 accessed at home and tend to appeal to internalizers rather than externalizers. The same program offers support in schools as well, but our experience is that they need a proctor and some supervision which made this almost impossible at the schools.”

2. “It seems like a good option as students can access by phone at any place. It would be especially good for rural areas that don’t have mental health professionals and service.”

3. “I believe many school districts will eventually support online counseling. For instance, Baltimore City Public Schools has a partnership Hazel Health as a in school or at home resource for tele-mental health services K-12. Parents, school based clinicians, or School leaders are able to make referrals for short term care. Parents or guardians receive notice and move forward with intake, if applicable. Hazel offers their service model in 15 different languages which supports the diversity of our students/families.”

4. Recently, I was asked by a regional education service agency to provide them with some information about text "counseling" because some school counselors wanted to know if it was effective (or even advisable). Below is part of what I shared with them.

There are several text counseling options now: Talkspace; BetterHelp; Calmery; ReGain; TextCoach; 7 Cups; Teen Counseling, etc., some of which have an associated cost (for example, BetterHelp is \$75 per week). Only a few insurance companies cover the cost of text counseling and don’t or won’t reimburse the costs. The Crisis Text Line is free but it's more appropriate for help in an immediate mental health crisis and isn’t a replacement for ongoing text counseling.

There is some research that indicates that two-way texting can be effective, but a lot of the research is with adults. One study from 2020 found that, "Remission of depression and anxiety symptoms was observed during delivery of psychotherapy through messaging. Improvement rates were consistent with face-to-face therapy, suggesting the suitability of two-way messaging psychotherapy delivery." (Two-way messaging therapy for depression and anxiety: longitudinal response trajectories - PMC (nih.gov) Another study considered text-type of therapy for PTSD and concluded that, "Multimedia message delivery for PTSD treatment showed symptom-reduction rates similar to traditional forms of treatment delivery, suggesting further study of messaging as a treatment medium. "Message Delivery for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Longitudinal Observational Study of Symptom Trajectories - PubMed (nih.gov)

Related to children, Texting at a Child Helpline: How Text Volume, Session length and Duration, Response Latency, and Waiting Time Are Associated with Counseling Impact | Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking (liebertpub.com), a study found that, "The results showed that sessions characterized by more text volume from the counselor in each message, but with fewer messages from beginning to end, were more effective than sessions without these characteristics. Furthermore, session duration was associated with a positive impact, whereas counselor response latency was not. This indicates that clients might benefit from the asynchronous affordance of texting as long as the counselor responds promptly and with dense messages." Another study about children found the texting technology itself was less important than the quality of the interaction between the child and the counselor: Children's experiences texting with a child helpline: British Journal of Guidance & Counselling: Vol 48, No 2 (tandfonline.com)

On the plus side, text counseling can make a school-aged child feel connected to someone, which can give them a sense of security; it might be effective in helping children to manage temporary or minor stress to keep it from becoming an anxiety issue; it can help children feel less isolated; it can give children a sense of self-control and management by internalizing the text mechanism as his/her own communication device; some children feel like they have some control in a world where so much seems out of control; children can learn how to identify and focus on what's important in their lives; and some children with underdeveloped expressive language or pragmatic (ability to use language appropriately in social situations) language skills can better express themselves through texting.

Some things to consider that are not so positive. Texting is just not conducive for relationship building, so there can be a false sense of bidirectional communication because there is no visual context of person to person like in-person or with telemental health with a screen. Mood and tone don't always come across clearly in text written formats, and of course body language doesn't come through at all. Plus, some children have difficulty putting feelings into words and some children who then use the voice feature can create extremely long messages that make it difficult for bidirectional exchange. In addition to the writing challenges, some children have difficulty reading text messages and decoding the meanings, depending on the level of complex language used by the counselor.

Also, there can be a delay between messages while texting, because it's very likely that the counselor is texting with other children at the same time. The length of delays can vary even within the same text encounter, which can heighten the stress level of children. Sometimes it can be challenging for the text counselor to establish guidelines for the use of the text. Additionally, parent permission for use of some text counselor can be fairly easily bypassed by children. With the growing popularity of text therapy and few safeguards, not all providers are reliable, and privacy issues may be a concern. "

5. "On one hand, mental health/counseling services are often over-extended and difficult to access, especially in more rural areas of the country. Having an online Student Assistance Program could reach more youth in a timely manner. Plus, young folks are typically comfortable with online communication and may be more likely to access help online than try to set an appointment at school during the day.

With the little information from this district website, it appears that the SAP may be a "bridge" to more intensive assistance and support. This could be helpful if counselors are well-trained and up-to-date on the programs and supports that are available to students that may contact them. Placing a traditionally trained counselor in such a problem by virtue of their credentials would be a mistake. A traditionally trained professional is taught to read a student's body language, voice, or mannerisms that could provide context for working with that student. The online format doesn't allow for that. The most effective programs employ counselors with strong interpersonal skills, training in the use of text-based communication and the ability to support a student in an age-appropriate fashion. "Age appropriate" means using professionals trained to work with that specific age group - not just using professionals

trained in adult-based design principles and interaction styles and simply tailoring reading levels for younger children and adolescents.

Limited research available has shown that effective online programs must:

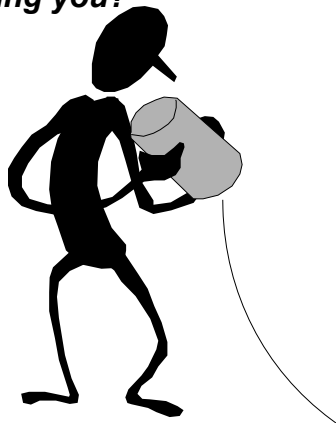
- > Be age appropriate (as mentioned above, designed for younger children/adolescents - not simply adjusting reading levels)
- > Employ professionals specifically trained in online counseling communications
- > Use professionals who understand and are proficient in securing "post counseling" support services for students so there are adults in their lives to help beyond the initial contact
- > Provide timely responses to service requests, and
- > Be based on behavior change principles underlying empirically-supported treatments.

These programs can fill a gap in services and support students when they are well-designed and have the resources they need to run effectively. However, I would caution any district considering such services to think about "opening the floodgates". One of the worst things that could happen is that students reach out and don't hear back. Not only does that create additional stress for students, but potentially opens the district up to litigation should the student decide to take drastic action when their request goes unanswered. Like anything else, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing well - and based on the best research available."

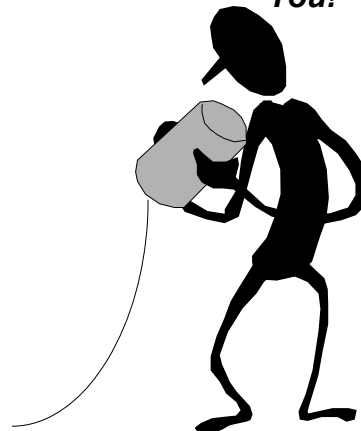
Ethical Issues in Online Psychotherapy: A Narrative Review

"...the top five ethical arguments in favor of online psychotherapy were (1) increased access to psychotherapy and service availability and flexibility; (2) therapy benefits and enhanced communication; (3) advantages related to specific client characteristics (e.g. remote location); (4) convenience, satisfaction, acceptance, and increased demand; and (5) economic advantages. The top five ethical arguments against engagement in online psychotherapy were (1) privacy, confidentiality, and security issues; (2) therapist competence and need for special training; (3) communication issues specific to technology; (4) research gaps; and (5) emergency issues..."

What's bothering you?



You!



For discussion and interchange:

>Rethinking universal mindfulness programs in schools

In a 2024 research [article](#), Brian Galla discusses some of the concerns that have arisen about how mindfulness interventions are being used at schools.

“... Mindfulness interventions rely on a single and demanding health behavior—namely, meditation—to cultivate mindfulness skills. But unlike traditional mindfulness interventions delivered in clinics to self-selected adults who are motivated to manage personal problems through meditation, universal school-based mindfulness interventions are delivered to all adolescents regardless of their desire to meditate. I review evidence from multiple randomized controlled trials of universal school-based mindfulness interventions to show that adolescents consistently report low levels of engagement in meditation and that many interventions have failed to improve adolescents' mental health. I propose that universal mindfulness interventions eliminate meditation entirely and focus on instilling contemplative viewpoints conducive to flourishing, and that the skill of mindfulness is taught only to adolescents who want to meditate....

Adolescents do not seek out these programs to resolve a personal problem and are not screened prior to starting. Consequently, these interventions must operate as though all teenagers already are (or can be) motivated to meditate regularly. But developmental science raises doubts about this assumption.

- >First, adolescents do not like it when adults tell them how to behave. If youth perceive meditation as yet another form of coercion, they could reject it and what it represents.
- >Second, adolescents often do not act with their future best interests in mind. It is unclear whether the prospect of building skills to address problems that exist only in an imagined future is compelling to adolescents who are not coping with depression or chronic stress.
- >Third, even for youth who want to cope more effectively, is meditation the sole activity on which they would rely? Because these interventions offer just one way to cope with suffering—by developing mindfulness skills—they exclude a collection of other strategies teenagers can and do use, like seeking social support, reappraisal, or physical exercise...

Common reasons teenagers give for not doing meditation “homework” (i.e., meditating at home) are that they do not find it helpful, do not feel they need it, and think it is boring....

A two-part solution to the motivation problem

1. The prevention rationale behind universal school based meditationu conflicts permanently with the expectation that all adolescents develop specialized mindfulness skills through meditation. So the first part of a two-part solution is to remove meditation and skill-building from the curriculum entirely, leaving a focus only on instilling salutary worldviews.... such views, including the idea that emotions like worry or sadness are normal and temporary human experiences, or that negative self-judgments do not necessarily reflect reality ... Help young people reframe their difficulties as temporary, malleable, and even surmountable. Such a perspective could prompt stronger feelings of agency and resilience to stress... Focusing on views solves the motivation problem because, unlike developing mindfulness skill sets through meditation, it does not require prolonged deliberate practice to change one's mind about certain ideas. In fact, persuasive, noncoercive, and targeted messages alter adolescents' views and subsequently, their behaviors and well-being, in sustained ways. Because new views can be internalized relatively quickly, can be brief, low-cost, and easy to administer. ...

2. The second part of solving the motivation problem is to reserve meditation training for adolescents who want to learn it... When adolescents choose to meditate, they are exercising autonomy and revealing interest, both of which should contribute to higher levels of engagement and learning. When low levels of engagement are no longer a main challenge, programs can focus on other goals, like increasing opportunities for adolescents to get high-quality training. This could involve expanding access to existing programs (e.g., mindfulness retreats) and adapting programs to the values and cultural practices of diverse groups of youth. To the extent that mindfulness meditation training continues to be delivered in schools, it could be offered as an elective or extracurricular activity. ...”

For more on this, here are a couple Center resources:

>[*Mindfulness and Schools*](#)

>[*Mindfulness: A Few Examples of Applications*](#)

Do you have views about this? Let us know; send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

First, here are some resources for responding to and coping with hurricane related events:

- >>[A list of resources for students, mental health practitioners and school staff dealing with the hurricane's aftermath](#)
- >>[Hurricane Resources from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- >>[The Ultimate Guide To Hurricane Preparedness, Recovery & Relief](#)

On other matters:

- >>[Section 504 Protections for Students with Anxiety Disorders](#)
- >>[RE: Best Practices for Adhering to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment \(EPSDT\) Requirements](#)
- >>[A Framework for Disability Inclusion at School](#)
- >>[Four new resources for schools, stakeholders, students with disabilities, and their families from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights \(OCR\)](#)
- >>[Early Adolescence: A Window of Opportunity for Educators to Support Positive Mental Health](#)
- >>[Trends in State Policy: Youth Mental Health](#)
- >>[Targeting Self-Regulation to Reduce Internalizing Problems in Children: The Predictive Effect of Resilience](#)
- >>[Mandated Reporting Policies Do Not Promote More Accurate Reporting of Suspected Neglect](#)
- >>[2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#)
- >>[‘They are watching you do everything online’: Children's perceptions of social media surveillance](#)
- >>[How to Help Kids Deal With Cyberbullying](#)
- >>[Cultivating child and youth decision-making](#)
- >>[Cash-Starved Districts Are Turning to Four-Day School Weeks. Will That Harm Students?](#)
- >>[Market Value Asset Achievement – Developing Systems + Preparing Students: A Guide for Schools and Communities](#)
- >>[Growth Interrupted: An Update on Dual Enrollment Participation Among Public High School Graduates](#)
- >>[Accumulation of Opportunities Predicts the Educational Attainment and Adulthood Earnings of Children Born Into Low- Versus Higher-Income Households](#)

A Few Upcoming Webinars
For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts

- 10/9 Use data to combat bullying
- 10/9 State planning for education technology
- 10/16 Cooperative activities
- 10/16 Principal pipelines
- 10/17 Promoting the wellbeing of students
- 10/17 Wellness and resilience
- 10/23 Addressing challenging behaviors
- 10/24 Effective communication with the IEP team
- 11/14 Balancing academics, extracurriculars and college application stress

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

Webinar recording: ***Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth***

For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families.** (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Looking for information? (We usually can help.)

Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Our Center is dedicating the 2024-2025 school year to renewing the ways we strive to help schools and communities improve and strengthen student/learning supports so all students have equity of opportunity to succeed at school. In moving forward, we will (1) accelerate our ongoing efforts to provide resources to the field at large and (2) advance efforts to implement and sustain new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, with an emphasis on replication to scale in school districts. And, of course, this encompasses embedding a full range of mental health concerns into everyday life at schools. ***We look forward to finding better ways to work with you.***

Hurricane Helene's impact on schools and communities – We have include links to some resources for responding to and coping with hurricanes. This horrendous disaster is one more indicator of the need for education leaders and policy makers to end the longstanding marginalization in school improvement policy related to the role schools must play in addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Schools committed to the success of all children must be redesigned so that teachers, student support staff, and others at the school must be prepared to help students and staff not only after problems arise, but as early as is feasible when they become aware of behavior, emotional, and learning problems. Such a redesign can minimize the impact of such problems and appropriately stem the tide of referrals for out of class specialized assistance (e.g., mental health services) and special education.

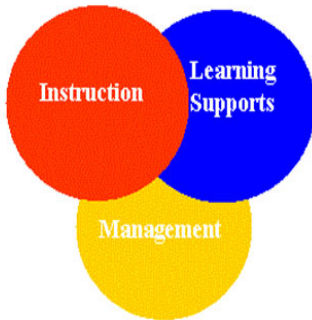
Through the **National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**, our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

If you are aware of efforts underway to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, please share with us.

And if anyone is thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing a *unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports*, we have many resources to help in moving forward. For example, see our recent guides:

- >**Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions**
- >**Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process**

Send all info and requests to ltaylor@ucla.edu



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.

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resource ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER

Who Are We? Recently renamed the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.