

Are the Kids Alright? Reflections on the COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Mental Health Functioning

Presented for End Abuse Long Beach
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Presentation Goals and Learning Objectives

1. Participants will be able to identify academic and mental health challenges faced by children and teens as a result of pandemic losses and disruptions.
2. Participants will be able to identify groups at higher risk for anxiety, depression, suicidal thinking and behavior, and steps being taken to respond to prevent suicidal crisis.
3. Participants will become familiar with the role of the Wellness Centers at LBUSD high schools and middle schools in supporting student needs and triaging access to mental health care and other resources.
4. Participants will be able to identify promising interventions used by community mental health agencies during the pandemic and recovery phase to support youth and families.
5. Participants will reflect on the parallel experiences of students, teachers, and therapists in the pandemic and recovery phase, and steps to support workforce wellness.
6. Participants will gain information on the role of social media platforms in supporting youth connection during the pandemic and recovery, with both positive and destructive aspects of social media (such as cyberbullying and sexual exploitation) considered.

Post-Pandemic Good News

Return to Normalcy . . . or at least a new normal

- Schools are open since 2021
- Sports teams, extra-curricular activities and social gatherings have resumed.



Initial research: ***Overall, preschool and young elementary age children appear to be adjusting better than teens.*** Many young children did well during pandemic having more time with family, less stress and pressure from being overbooked with activities, especially true in high resource families where parents available to attend to children's needs.

As pandemic restrictions eased, higher SES children and teens have parents getting them engaged again in sports, music and dance lessons, after school activities.

What we are seeing in Mental Health Clinic Settings?

***Unprecedented number of referrals to community mental health agencies
in 2022 and 2023***

Young teen (especially girls 12 to 15) are having the most difficult mental health and social adjustments.



National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health" -2021

Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children's Hospital Association

Pandemic's unprecedented impacts of the mental health of America's youth:

U.S. Surgeon General Advisory "Protecting Youth Mental Health" 2021

Types of Problems

- Loss & Grief Estimated 250,000 Children and Teens in U.S. lost a parent or primary caregiver who died during pandemic.

Trend from prior to pandemic, but worsened during pandemic:

- Increased Anxiety, Depression, Feelings of Hopelessness
- Increased Suicidal Thoughts & Behaviors
- Increase in adolescent suicide deaths nationally

2nd highest cause of death in young teens

- Device/social media addiction problems
 - Body dysmorphia, shaming, eating disorders
 - Cyberbullying and Sexual Exploitation
- Delayed reports of domestic violence and child abuse



Youth at Higher Risk of Mental Health Challenges from Pandemic Impact: Those vulnerable, under-resourced or already not doing well before 2020.

- Mental Health Challenges or multiple risk factors
- Racial and ethnic minorities:
 - Black youth more likely to lose parent or guardian to COVID
 - Latino Youth report higher rates of loneliness, anxiety, depression
- LGBTQ+ - confined in homes not supportive or accepting
- Financial instability, food shortages, housing instability
- More Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) prior to pandemic
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities-disruption in special education and school supports

The COVID-19 Pandemic was a Chronic Stress Event

Under normal conditions the top three contributors to stress for Children and Teens:

1. Parental Stress & Conflict
2. Sleep Disruption: Teens need more sleep (9 to 10 hours) than any age except infants. This makes sleep regulation and body regulation techniques a important part in pandemic impact recovery.
3. Digital screen activity (Shift from a focus on total screen time to benefits and risks of how devices and social media are being used; device addition contributes to sleep disturbance).

And 2020 was more than the COVID-19 pandemic.

Racism and violence had a huge impact on all of us, mental health providers, clients, and the parents and families of children we serve.

The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, & Ahmaud Arbery.

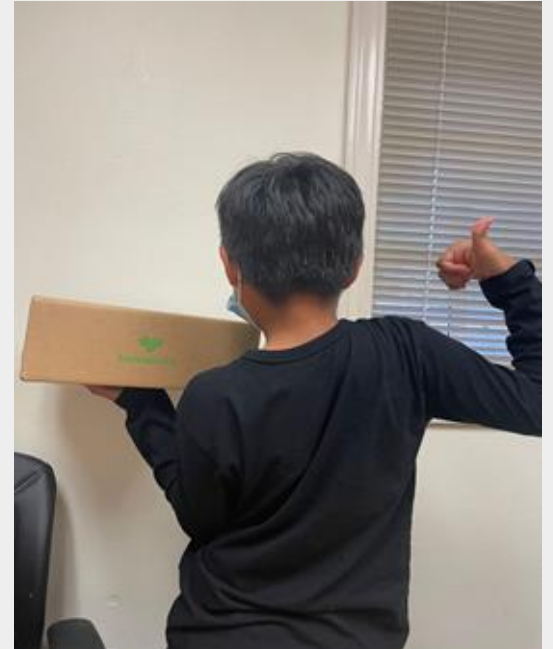
The protests and riots that followed.

Everyone seemed anxious, angry, on edge. Building trust with parents took center stage in order to provide services for children.



What is helping? Equity in Access to Mental Health Care

- ❑ Jordan (9 years old when the pandemic began).
- ❑ Grandma who raised him died from COVID-19.
- ❑ He could not see her in the hospital to say goodbye.
- ❑ How therapy, partnership with family caregivers and his own creativity supported his recovery from complicated bereavement.



Intervention with Teens with Suicidal Thoughts and Behavior



Trisha and younger brother Dylan

High conflict between parents and “safer at home” during pandemic

Depressed and anxious before COVID-19 crisis, with suicidal ideation

How individual and family therapy supported recovery

What is helping: Going beyond past approaches

Youth voice in selecting how their mental health services are delivered (in-person (individual or group), telehealth (laptop, chromebook, or cell phone), and use of web based apps (CALM)

Suicide Prevention Programs that combine teen (peer) training and support imbedded with adult support from schools or community (Example: SAMHSA Sources of Strength model)

Huge Success of Virtual Workshops to Engage Parents with their input on relevant topics: Examples of topics: Understanding the Teenage Brain and the Importance of Sleep, Cyberbullying, My Digital World (The Good, the Bad, and the Really Bad); How to Support Your Child's Return to School; Understanding Teen Mental Health Needs)

Provision of Basic Need Support to relieve financial stress and partnership with other community agencies (examples: Food bank linkages, Human-I-T partnership for chromebooks and low cost IT support and internet connection)

Long Beach Unified School District investing in the mental health resources needed up front to screen, intervene, and partner with community agencies in innovative ways.

What does school look like post-pandemic?

Return to School:

- Lack of relationships that create connection
- Impact of trauma and isolation
- Delayed social development
- Instructional gaps and learning loss

Currently:

- More activities that create connection
- Gaps in learning and experiences
- Tremendous increase in available mental health supports at school
- Need for adult support and wellness
- Expressed concern about adults well-being from students

Pandemic Learnings and Supportive Structures

- “Not about us without us.”
- Creation of Wellness Centers
- Including student perspective/voice in our planning of needs and next steps.
- Tutoring and learning acceleration
- Brave teaching and modification of “what has always been done”

Student Voice and Agency

- Students as partners
- When planning for student participation, students should be present and speak “first, last and most”
- Encouragement for sites to have student advisory groups (even at the elementary school level)

Wellness Centers: Created for Students by Students

Present in all of our Middle and High Schools:

- Individual/Group Counseling Services by appointment
- Same Day (Check-In) Appointments during class w/ teacher referral/approval
- Family Educational Workshops & Family Support Groups
- Opportunities for community building through service/projects
- Classroom Presentations
- Faculty Professional Development, Workshops & Staff Consultations
- Student and Family Case Management (Coordination with Internal/External Resources)
- Special Interest Activities (Art, Mindfulness, Meditation, Yoga)
- Basic Needs Closet (Uniforms/Toiletries/School Supplies)/Family Food Insecurity Pantry

Named by Students:

Hamilton Middle School - The Wolverine's Den

Browning High School - The Hangout

Sato - The Dragon's Den

Franklin Middle School - Rise House

Keller Middle School - Place of Peace (POP)



Pen Pal Newcomer Project



External Community Agency Workshop



Family Events



Student Driven Center Identity



ELL Support Group



Parent Workshops



Special Interest Groups



Counseling Groups

Embracing Excellence & Equity



Food Pantry &
Basic Needs Closet



SEL Classroom Presentations



Special Interest Activities



Student Driven Resources



Staff Workshops



Community Service Projects



Special Interest Activities



School Wide
Interventions

Embracing Excellence & Equity

Family Resource Centers (FRC)

- FRC's provide social, emotional and behavioral health support in 32 schools
- Staff provide individual counseling, group counseling and classroom presentations
- FRC staff connect with families to make linkages to other supportive services
- FRC staff continue to use virtual meetings as a way of removing barriers to accessing care for families.
- 15 total FRC staff: 12 School Psychologists and Counselors, 3 School Social Workers

WHERE ARE THE FRCS?

FRC North Region (District Area 1) Office: Lindbergh STEM Middle School Phone Number: (562) 422-2615	FRC West Region (District Area 2) Office: Stephens Middle School Phone Number: (562) 981-8990
<p>Addams ES Barton ES Dooley ES Grant ES King ES</p> <p>McKinley ES Powell K-8 Hamilton MS Lindbergh MS Lindsey MS</p>	<p>Garfield ES Hudson ES Robinson K-8 Roosevelt ES Smith ES</p> <p>Webster ES Stephens MS Washington MS EPHS</p>

WHERE ARE THE FRCS CONTINUED?

FRC Downtown/Central Region (District Area 3) Office: Chavez Elementary School Phone Number: (562) 590 - 0904	FRC East Region (Districts Area 4 & Area 5) Office: Signal Hill Elementary School Phone Number: (562) 426-8170
Chavez ES Edison ES Lincoln ES Oropeza ES Whittier ES Willard ES Franklin MS	Signal Hill ES Jefferson MS Nelson MS Holmes ES Hoover MS Marshall MS

FRC Services... then and now.

FRC Referrals	2018-2019	September 1, 2022- March 23, 2023
	548	1,093

	2018-2019	September 1, 2022- March 23, 2023
Parent Groups/Trainings	42 trainings	141 hours, 469 attendees
Staff PD	12 presentations	87.5 hours, 173 attendees
Classroom Presentations	77 presentations	91 hours, 4,023 attendees
Community Outreach	data not gathered	146 hours, 1,791 people reached
Case Management/ Linkages	data not gathered	56 hours and 60 referrals provided

See Something, Say Something

Sandy Hook PROMISE

Who We Are ▾ Our Programs ▾ Get Info ▾ Take Action ▾

Say Something Tips

See It. Report It.

The Say Something Anonymous Reporting System allows you to submit secure, anonymous safety concerns to help someone who may hurt themselves or others.

[Submit A Tip](#)

How To Submit An Anonymous Tip

-  **Submit A Tip**
Submit A Tip Through Our
-  **Call Hotline**
Call Our 24/7 Crisis Hotline
-  **Get The App**
Download Our Mobile App At
-  **Follow Up**
Request [Follow Up](#) Information On

Considerations and Next Steps...

- Positive outcomes will grow out of this chronic stress events
 - Unexpected coping strategies help to move us to a more create place
- Zoom has created access for parents and caregivers who may have barriers to accessing support
- Tele-Health as a hybrid method of delivering service
- Wellness needs of front line service providers (e.g therapists, teachers, etc.)
- Peer Support Models - Impact of support for one another