



Supporting children’s mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Collaborative planning resources

Prepared for the Hennepin County Children’s Mental Health Collaborative – August 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide some resources for Collaborative-level planning related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s mental health. In many ways, the current pandemic poses unique challenges to our children’s mental health system. However, at the same time, some existing recommendations emerge from the existing literature related to prior infectious disease outbreaks/quarantines and from other community-wide disasters or traumas.

Issue	Questions	Sample recommendations from the field
Community supports	How can we support child/ family connectedness during this time of physical isolation?	<p>Promote family activities designed to increase social connectedness (e.g., bringing people together physically as it become safer to do so, but also using technology to connect such as text messages, video calling, facilitated online forums, etc.)</p> <p>Support agencies in conducting outreach to families who may be isolated (such as families who have disengaged from school or services)</p> <p>Expand the use of peer navigators and other family support models</p>
Identification of mental health issues	How can we increase our capacity to identify children with potential or emerging mental health concerns, and then connect them with appropriate supports?	<p>Expand training in psychological first aid in a variety of settings (i.e., schools, faith communities, first responders, youth program)</p> <p>Expand use of psychological screening in schools and other community settings, including screening specifically-tailored to identify the impacts of COVID-19</p> <p>Use social marketing techniques to distribute information about mental health impacts and services to families</p> <p>Expand co-located mental health services and other supports in early childhood settings</p>
Reduce family stress	How can we reduce family stress and promote family resilience?	<p>Conduct outreach to families experiencing economic stress (consider partnerships with unemployment services, food shelves, etc.)</p> <p>Strengthen partnerships/referral relationships between child and adult behavioral health services (as children/families are also likely to be impacted by increased parent stress and mental health challenges)</p> <p>Provide behavioral health resources and information to families (in multiple languages)</p>
Telehealth	What challenges/ successes resulted from the shift towards more telehealth services?	<p>Ensure full coverage for services provided via telehealth</p> <p>Develop strategies for more effectively using telehealth to support work with children and adolescents</p>

Issue	Questions	Sample recommendations from the field
Support school-based services and supports	How do we ensure that school-based mental health services are accessible/effective in the context of distance learning?	<p>Adapt school-based resource and referral processes for identifying and serving youth with mental health needs</p> <p>Incorporate anxiety reduction/mindfulness techniques in schools and other community settings and distribute stress management resources to teachers and parents</p> <p>Provide resources and guidance to teachers to enhance their ability to support social-emotional learning in virtual learning</p>
Support the mental health workforce	What does the mental health workforce need to support their own well-being during this stressful time?	<p>Support use of alternative professional development strategies for the behavioral health workforce (who may need support and skill development, while also avoiding in-person trainings or conferences)</p> <p>Promote self-care and resilience for the mental health workforce</p>

Resources used

Journal articles

Brooks, SK et al. The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*. Published online February 26, 2020.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30460-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext)

Chan, A.T. & Brownstein, J.S. (2020). Putting the public back in public health – surveying symptoms of COVID-19. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 383:345.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2016259>

Evans AC, & Bufka LF. (2020). The critical need for a population health approach: Addressing the nation’s behavioral health during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *Preventing Chronic Disease*; 17:200261. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd17.200261>external icon.

Liu, J.J., Bao, Y., Huang, X., Si, J. & lu, L. (2020). *Mental health considerations for children quarantined because of COVID 19. Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, 4(5), 347-349. doi: [10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30096-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30096-1)

McFarlane, A.C. & Willias, R. (2012). Mental health services required after disasters: Learning from the lasting effects of disasters.

Depression research and Treatment. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/970194>

North, C.& Pfefferbaum, B. (2013). Mental health response to community disasters: A systematic review. *Journal of the American Medical Association* DOI: 10.1001/jama.2013.107799

Pfefferbaum, B. & North, C.S. (2020). Mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 383: 510-512.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2008017>

Websites

Public Health Emergency: [Practical Leadership Tips for Enhancing Staff Behavioral Health During a Crisis](#)

Partnership Center: [Mental health in a time of COVID-19: Preparing Leaders for the Increase of Mental Health Concerns](#)

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: (1) [Psychological Effects of Quarantine During the Coronavirus Outbreak: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know](#); (2) [Psychological Effects of Quarantine During the Coronavirus Outbreak: What Public Health Leaders Need to Know](#)

U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration: (1) [Double jeopardy: COVID-19 and behavioral health disparities for Black and Latino communities in the U.S.](#); (2) [Disaster planning handbook for behavioral health treatment programs](#); (3) [Disaster behavioral health preparedness and response resources](#); (4) [Stronger together: An in-depth look at selected community-level approaches to disaster behavioral health](#)

Uplift Family Services: [The psychological impact of COVID-19: Behavioral health’s vital role in the response and recovery](#)

National Center for PTSD: [For providers and community leaders: Helping people manage stress associated with the COVID-19 virus outbreak.](#)

