



# NEWSLETTER

September 2020 Edition

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Welcome to the Office of Children’s Mental Health (OCMH) September Newsletter!

## Returning to School during the Pandemic – What’s on People’s Minds?

Return to school looks different throughout our state and country. And feelings vary among children, parents, teachers, and others. In the Office of Children’s Mental Health (OCMH) we’ve asked a number of our partners to share what is on their minds regarding returning to school during the pandemic. Organizations representing early childhood education, mental health service providers, education, and non-profits weighed in. With a children’s mental health lens, a number of themes emerged:



### Supporting families

- Some families are in dire financial situations.
- What will parents who have to go back to work do about childcare and monitoring their children’s schooling if schools are virtual?
- For schools that return to the classroom there is the uncertainty of them closing again.
- Some families rely on the meals their children get at school.

### Safety

- Children in violent homes during COVID-19.
- Being safe from COVID-19 in reopened schools.

### Resiliency

- Mental well-being in parents, children, and teachers.
- Encourage/support efforts to “find meaning” in dealing with COVID-19.

### Equity

- Internet access and technology requirements have left many students behind academically.
- Educational gap resulting from virtual learning.
- Students with special education needs have suffered in virtual environment.
- Racism – Asians being blamed for the virus and Blacks affected by tragic events and police violence.
- COVID-19 affecting Black and Hispanics at disproportionate rates.

### Trauma sensitive schools

- Schools develop a trauma-sensitive environment that is welcoming to children and adults who may have a range of responses to COVID including anxiety over pandemic.
- Compassion fatigue among educators.

## What Youth are Saying

### Mental Health

Youth from across the state were invited to share their thoughts on mental health in a virtual **Youth Listening Session** held by OCMH on August 27, 2020. A number of themes rose from the robust discussion.



- To feel emotionally supported this school year, students need interaction with other students, connections with teachers, and mental health support.
- Students feel teachers could support students' mental health a number of ways: be welcoming/available for students to talk to them; providing individual attention; checking in and making space for students to talk; and share their own stories.
- Students can support each other's mental health by noticing and responding when they see someone struggling. Students need to be educated about the warning signs.
- Students determine if someone is safe to talk to by knowing or trusting them and if they share their story.
- Students should start learning about mental health earlier, when they first start school. They should learn how to take care of their mental health, ask for help, and that it's OK to ask for help.
- A take away from the Listening Session for students was how similar their experiences are.

### Returning to School

How do students feel about returning to school? A report seeking to fill this information gap was conducted by WIPPS Research Partners in Marathon County. In-depth information was gathered from 47 Marathon County middle and high school students in August. The report, titled "[The Voices of Marathon County Students Returning to School During COVID-19](#)", identified the following:



- Students have a high level of anxiety, uncertainty, and stress related to school resuming in the fall regardless of whether their school was starting in person, virtually, or in a blended model.
- COVID-19 safety is a concern, but of great concern is how students will learn and connect with teachers and fellow students in meaningful ways, especially in remote or virtual settings.
- Students support learning through a variety of flexible options including on-site (cited as a high priority).
- The potential loss of sports, clubs, music, and extracurricular is a significant concern and students hope schools will look for creative solutions rather than cancel these.
- Students are frustrated with the lack of direct communication from school leaders about return to school details.

## Legislative/Policy Update

**Telehealth.** The Office of the Commissioner of Insurance is interested in hearing from consumers on challenges to having mental health telehealth visits covered by health insurance companies. If you have information to share, you may email [ocicomplaints@wisconsin.gov](mailto:ocicomplaints@wisconsin.gov). Consider copying [ocmh@wisconsin.gov](mailto:ocmh@wisconsin.gov) so we may also be aware of the challenges you face.

**Mental Health Workforce.** The Legislative & Policy Committee of the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health’s subcommittee working on policy and application review issues related to the licensing of mental health professionals is continuing its work with the Department of Safety and Professional Services on identifying steps to remove administrative barriers to licensure. If you are interested in more information, please email [linda.hall@wi.gov](mailto:linda.hall@wi.gov).

## Children’s Mental Health in Professional Literature

*OCMH Senior Research Analyst Melissa Murphy spotlights new, open access articles about children’s mental health.*



**Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance United States – 2019.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Supplement/Vol.69/No1. August 21, 2020. [Read the article.](#)

**Support for Transition from Adolescent to Adult Health Care Among Adolescents With and Without Mental, Behavioral, and Developmental Disorders** — United States, 2016–2017. [Read the article.](#)

**Treatment of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder among Children with Special Health Care Needs.** [Read the article.](#)

*More articles are available on the [OCMH Website](#).*

## Of Interest

### September is National Suicide Prevention Month

With a national focus on suicide prevention in September, it is a time to raise awareness, share resources, and tell stories to shed light on this all too often stigmatized topic. Governor Tony Evers [proclaimed](#) September as Suicide Prevention Month and September 10, 2020 as Suicide Prevention Day in Wisconsin.



### Wisconsin Facts

- The rate of adolescents who are dying by suicide has risen in the last few years across the nation as well as in Wisconsin, especially among vulnerable populations. <sup>1</sup>
- Among youth ages 1-26, suicide is the second leading cause of death. <sup>2</sup>
- About 1 in 13 high school students attempt suicide one or more times <sup>3</sup>

*(see resource citations on next page)*

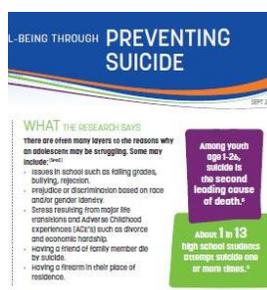
[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  
800.273-TALK (8255)  
or call 911

*[Suicide in Wisconsin: Impact and Response](#) is a new report sharing Wisconsin data and the Wisconsin Suicide Prevention Plan produced in collaboration with the Prevent Suicide Wisconsin Steering Committee.*

## OCMH Fact Sheets – September Fact Sheet focuses on Suicide Prevention



### August Fact Sheet Supporting Child Well-Being through [Improving School Outcomes](#)



### September Fact Sheet Supporting Child Well- Being through [Preventing Suicide](#)

#### What we can do to support child well-being through preventing suicide:

- Parents can follow [advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) that says the safest home for a child is one without guns.
- Schools can foster connectedness and protective environments by implementing peer support programs like [Hope Squad](#) and [Sources of Strength](#).

#### Resource Citations for Wisconsin Suicide Facts

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2018 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2020. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2018, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html> on Aug 24, 2020 4:19:00 PM

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data Source: National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), National Vital Statistics System. Retrieved from: <https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2018). Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2017. Surveillance Summaries. MMWR, 67(8). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/2017/ss6708.pdf>

## WISH Expanding Mental Health Services – Hiring Coaches and Coordinator

The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools (WISH) Center is expanding services to provide coaching to school teams on mental health and social and emotional learning. Eight Regional Coaches ([job description](#)) and a Statewide Project Coordinator ([job description](#)) will be hired. These are two-year, limited-term contracts with the ability to work from home. Interested individuals should apply using the [WECAN website](#). Applications are due September 15, 2020. Questions can be directed to Tracy Herlitzke, [therlitzke@cesa4.org](mailto:therlitzke@cesa4.org).

## OCMH Hiring an Outreach Specialist Position

OCMH is hiring a limited term employee (LTE) as an Outreach Specialist who will further our efforts to build diverse membership for the OCMH collective impact work. Specifically, the Outreach Specialist will identify and build connections with community-based organizations and groups led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) as well as mental health coalitions, county-based providers, and other underrepresented stakeholders in the children’s mental health collective impact network. The position is 15 – 20 hours per week, and the approximate duration of the LTE appointment is 20 – 26 weeks. Deadline to apply is 9/16/20. [For application information](#).

(Workgroup Team Updates on next page)

## Workgroup Team Updates – August

### Executive Council

- The Executive Council’s quarterly meeting was August 7<sup>th</sup>. The Lifespan of a Child focus was ages 13 – 18.
- A panel from Adams Friendship Schools shared information about their nationally recognized approach to rural school mental health. Their continuum of mental health support ranges from positive/healthy functioning to severe impact on everyday functioning. Universal practices include suicide prevention, anti-bullying, mental health awareness, relationship building, and resiliency building. Barriers, system outcomes, student/parent engagement, and peer-to-peer support was also discussed.
- Melissa Murphy, OCMH Senior Research Analyst, presented OCMH’s Wisconsin Children’s Initiatives scan, a program-based grid that highlights collaborative or stand-alone agency initiatives specific to children’s mental health. The intention of the tool is to identify where investments in children’s mental health are occurring and opportunities for collaboration and increased effectiveness of spending on children’s mental health.
- Linda Hall, OCMH Director, continued discussion on OCMH strategic planning. The establishment of an Advisory Council was presented. The Advisory Council would be a smaller group than the Executive Council, have specific categories of representation, focus on cross systems collaboration, and be advisory to OCMH in priority setting. The Executive Council voted to support adding the Advisory Council to OCMH’s collective impact structure.

### Lived Experience Partners

- In August, Parent and Young Adult Lived Experience Partners learned about strategic sharing and storytelling.
- When asked what they want policymakers to learn about children’s mental health, their responses included:
  - How mental health affects every aspect of family life.
  - Children’s mental health is a collective, ongoing lifelong process/journey.
  - Access is still a big problem in rural areas.
  - There’s no Band-Aid or cookie cutter solution that will work for every situation.
  - To listen to the voice of lived experience and compromise on solutions.

### Access

- How does having “equitable” in the mission statement change/inform their work was the focus of the Access workgroup team. Workgroup members shared what their organizations are doing on equity and the workgroup team had small group discussions.
- Continued learning on what organizations are doing regarding provider and parent awareness of resources. United Way Wisconsin presented on 211 and their new “Powered by 211” program, funded by a grant from the Medical College of Wisconsin through their advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment to address a response to COVID-19.

### Infant Toddler

- Continuing strategic planning and the identification of a second area of focus beyond the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) model, the workgroup team decided to work on immediate needs of COVID-19.

- The two sub-workgroups for IECMHC (Model/Workforce Development and Communications/ Finance) will combine and a new second sub-workgroup will form around the new topic. Members will decide which sub-workgroup they want to participate on.
- Infant Toddler submitted IECMHC communication for ECAC September meeting. The submission is specific to reducing expulsions and in process for the budget. Additional work for the IECMHC sub-workgroup includes data, evaluation, and communications.

## Resiliency

- The next OCMH Youth Listening Session is August 27<sup>th</sup> so the workgroup team will review those results at its next meeting.
- In reviewing the responses, the workgroup team will follow a Human-Centered Design approach. This is a framework for understanding problems and imagining possible solutions that involves at every step the perspective of the people who are close to the issue.

## Trauma-Informed Care

- The meeting focus was to determine topic areas for trauma-informed care trainings. The workgroup team reviewed training suggestions from prior workshop attendees. Small group discussions identified three top themes: self-care, how to foster resiliency post COVID-19 – organizational fatigue, and cultural/minority trauma.
- Co-chairs will bring suggestions to the September meeting.

The Office of Children's Mental Health  
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