

# Children's Behavioral Health Coalition

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August 20, 2020

Dr. Karen B. Salmon  
Office of State Superintendent  
State Department of Education  
Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building,  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Superintendent Salmon:

Thank you for everything you have done to protect the health and safety of Maryland students and school staff during this unprecedented public health emergency. The steps taken by you and your team have undoubtedly limited spread of the coronavirus in our public schools.

As our attention turns now toward ensuring a safe reopening of Maryland's public education facilities, we must be sure to adequately address the behavioral health needs of our students. While most young Marylanders have been spared from physical symptoms of the coronavirus, they have not been spared from the loneliness, depression and anxiety that accompanies a prolonged state of isolation from friends, teachers and community networks. Unfortunately, school closures have disrupted many students' main access point to behavioral health treatment and other critical resources.

It is with this understanding that the undersigned organizations of the Children's Behavioral Health Coalition offer the attached edits to *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*. These suggestions would ensure more support for students and increase the effectiveness of school behavioral health programs across the state.

In summary, our proposed edits:

- Revise the School Counselors section to expand the list of school personnel identified for professional development, increase utilization of student support teams, encourage promotion of a youth crisis hotline, and expand the distribution of literature on mental health disorders and substance use disorders;
- Modify the School Social Workers section to encourage collaboration between school counselors and social workers to implement a uniform assessment and referral process;
- Amend the School-Based Health Centers section to correct certain terminology related to behavioral health disorders; and
- Add a new section titled Community Partnered School Behavioral Health to increase utilization of community partners in providing educator self-care, classroom support, and resources for families to address student mental health and well-being. It reinforces collaboration between community partners and school-based health centers, the development of a referral system for tele-mental health and crisis services, and consultation with families and other providers to provide individualized support.

When the school year restarts, we encourage the Maryland State Department of Education to provide each school district with the guidance necessary to protect students' emotional well-being during these

times of uncertainty and confusion. More than ever, families will rely on schools to provide resources and supports for their children with behavioral health needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. If you have any questions, please contact Irnande Altema at 443-901-1550 x206 or [ialtema@mhamd.org](mailto:ialtema@mhamd.org).

Enclosure

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children and Youth  
Behavioral Health System Baltimore  
Catholic Charities  
Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland  
Disability Rights Maryland  
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland  
Maryland Coalition of Families  
Maryland Psychological Association  
Maryland Psychiatric Society  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association  
Mental Health Association of Maryland  
NAMI Maryland  
National Association of Social Workers - Maryland  
National Center for School Mental Health  
On Our Own Maryland

Maryland Together: Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Education

(pages 38-50)

<b>SCHOOL COUNSELORS</b>	
<b>Professional development</b>	<p>Create professional development for staff <b>including teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, janitorial staff, School Resource Officers, etc.</b> regarding typical childhood reactions to stress and trauma which might have resulted from <b>social distancing</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MSDE, in collaboration with the Maryland School Counselor Association and higher education school counseling programs, is working with school counselors from across the State to create classroom guidance lessons (virtual and face-to face) for students at all grade levels on social-emotional needs, including trauma.</li> <li>• The MSDE has created a workgroup working on Maryland resources and materials designed to address the social emotional needs for students and staff.</li> <li>• School-based health centers with mental health supports will be available for students, as will <b>community partnered school mental health</b> programs that exist in many school systems.</li> <li>• School systems, with the support of the MSDE, are planning on implementing the use of Restorative Practices and Mindfulness strategies to address the social-emotional needs of students.</li> </ul> <p>The MSDE will be providing training in these practices in the summer 2020 as well as ongoing training to ensure effective implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help student service staff create professional development for teachers and adult staff (remember bus drivers, cafeteria, and janitorial staff).</li> </ul>
<b>Transitions – services that can be implemented spring &amp; summer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-facilitate staff training related to <b>re-starting</b> concerns, e.g. trauma, grief, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Integrate the Student Support Team model/structure to bring in academic staff, also implement with youth transitioning from Head Start to public school systems.</b></li> <li>• Assist in the development of a <b>re-starting</b> protocol with the school leadership team and communicating the plan to students and families.</li> <li>• Hold virtual transition meetings between school counselors at sending and receiving schools.</li> <li>• Work with special education to participate or to hold additional meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health support - Classroom guidance, individual counseling, group counseling, referrals, student support team referrals, community referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with classroom teachers about student needs and develop classroom guidance lessons as appropriate to the age and grade level.</li> <li>• Teach, or co-teach social emotional learning strategies to help students <b>cope with and</b> adjust to the changes in their environments</li> <li>• Assist teachers with celebrating individual student resilience (What I did during the virus to be safe) <b>Review</b> student work to assess mental health needs (Journals, art work, etc.)</li> <li>• Develop classroom guidance lessons on gratefulness: post student work in hallways <b>or online on school websites</b> thanking the cleaning staff, the nurses, doctors, grocery workers, etc.</li> <li>• Assist teachers or create classroom guidance lessons on how to help others at a safe distance.</li> <li>• Encourage virtual hellos and stories to seniors in nursing homes, etc. Provide individual <b>and/or group</b> counseling to students who express fears, loss, anxiety and/or signs of depression.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer students (via legal guardians if under 16 years of age) to outside professional counseling as needed (may be onsite or offsite depending on school partnerships, choice should always be facilitated and insurance reimbursement should always be considered).</li> <li>• Co-teach lesson (health) on depression symptoms and warning signs and offer referral services to students and staff Observe and talk to students who may have signs of abuse or neglect.</li> <li>• Use referral processes to secure help for the student and family Plan with administrators for sudden closing of schools due to resurgence of the virus.</li> <li>• Develop a plan to reach homeless students, student without internet services, etc.</li> <li>• Develop a plan to stock up on needed supplies should the virus return</li> <li>• Communication strategies for caregivers, students, staff and teachers Collaborate with student support staff and administrators for emergency planning should the virus return and schools need to close again. Offer a hotline number for students/families to call for mental health support/referral during school hours.</li> <li>• Continuation of learning, disinfecting schools, mental health concerns of repeated stress of isolation, return, and re-isolation.</li> <li>• Check in with staff to support their mental health needs and refer Employee Assistance as needed. Provide professional development for staff on issues related to the possible return of the virus and stress management.</li> <li>• Provide staff development with a focus on how teachers should talk to students (age appropriate) about the possibility of a return to social distancing.</li> </ul>
	SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
<b>Mental Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-lead classroom lessons on social emotional learning strategies.</li> <li>• Consult with teachers as students return to identify classroom strategies to help support all students and interventions for individual students as appropriate.</li> <li>• Provide information to teachers about signs of mental health concerns and distress, including depression, anxiety, behavior dysregulation, substance use, etc., so they can identify students who need support.</li> <li>• Consult with teachers and administration on school-wide behavioral needs of students and work with the student support team to provide supports.</li> <li>• Collaborate with school counselors and school social workers to provide lessons for students regarding managing change and managing anxiety.</li> <li>• Consult with student services staff on plans to address the possibility of another outbreak and how to emotionally prepare students and staff.</li> <li>• Provide supportive counseling and consultation for teachers who are struggling with issues related to the virus and confinement.</li> <li>• Refer staff to community and system agencies. Visit classrooms to observe adult behaviors looking for signs of stress and anxiety.</li> <li>• Discuss concerns with administration and refer as needed. Assist as a member of traumatic loss team to identify students who have lost a close family member or relative to COVID-19 while they were not in school.</li> <li>• Triage for supportive services as needed. Provide risk assessments as needed to students who may present as a danger to self or others.</li> <li>• Meet with caregivers to discuss student needs and provide information to caregivers on how to talk to their children about corona virus.</li> </ul>

<b>Counseling/ therapy - Individual supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with teachers, school counselors, <b>caregivers</b>, and school social workers to deliver services to students who display outward signs of trauma.</li> <li>• <b>Refer students (via legal guardians if under 16 years of age) to professional counseling as needed (may be onsite or off-site depending on school partnerships, choice should always be facilitated and insurance reimbursement should always be considered).</b></li> <li>• Provide age appropriate information and support to students related to student anxiety, fears, and loss.</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS</b>	
<b>School support re-starting - Consultation, collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with administration and student support staff to develop <b>re-starting</b> procedures for students.</li> <li>• Collaborate to create professional development activities for faculty and student <b>re-starting</b> with a focus on mental health needs.</li> <li>• Collaborate with school counselors on classroom guidance activities related to what students did during the confinement period. Review student work for signs of abuse, neglect, or depression.</li> <li>• <b>Allow for collaboration among school counselors and social workers to have a uniform and comprehensive assessment process of students as well as a uniform referral process to community partners to support student needs.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Family support - Home visits, consultation, referral, and counseling</b>	<p>Visit families <b>in the community</b> who need information and support regarding health, food, shelter, Medicaid and other community services. Prepare safety and other corona virus information for <b>caregivers in partnership with School Based Health Centers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include what the school is doing to keep student safe. Refer families to community agencies for resources.</li> <li>• Consult with school counselors and teachers regarding students who report a lack of food or shelter.</li> <li>• Observe students in eating areas to see who has food and who does not.</li> <li>• Consult with school nurse regarding students without medical coverage, and refer to Medicaid <b>or other entitlement programs as appropriate.</b></li> <li>• Counsel families (observing social distancing to address family relationships that may have been strained by confinement). Provide therapeutic interventions for students who need service for depression, anxiety, fear, and loss.</li> <li>• Provide services required on IEPs as student return to schools.</li> <li>• Assess students for signs of abuse or neglect. Meet with students as needed around these issues.</li> <li>• Check-in with students with known anxiety and fear concerns.</li> <li>• Provide counseling as needed. Observe staff for signs of stress and anxiety. Refer as needed. Involve Employee Assistance.</li> <li>• Provide information to <b>caregivers</b> on home visits (protective gear) regarding school attendance and child discipline techniques.</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES</b>	
<b>Strategies to manage and reduce Mental Health/Anxiety</b>	<p>Work with school counselor and school psychologists on strategies to reduce mental health and anxiety related to COVID-19. Be sure to acknowledge the situation, acknowledge and validate the emotions, and provide a coping toolbox for calming strategies.</p>

	<b>COMMUNITY PARTNERED SCHOOL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH</b>
<b>School support re-starting – supporting school staff</b>	<p>Work with administration and student support staff to develop re-starting procedures and supports for students and families.</p> <p>Collaborate to create professional development activities for faculty and student re-starting with a focus on assessing, promoting, and addressing mental health and well-being.</p> <p>Check-in staff to support their mental health needs and refer Employee Assistance as needed.</p>
<b>School-wide and Classroom Support, classroom lessons, resource development and sharing</b>	<p>Lead or co-lead with teaching staff and/or school employed mental health staff, classroom lessons on social emotional learning, mindfulness, positive life skills, coping skills, etc.</p> <p>Observe students for signs of stress or other mental health related concerns as part of in-person or online classrooms.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for students to check-in about mental health related concerns or challenges.</p> <p>Offer practical resources and support opportunities to families related to managing and thriving during the pandemic and addressing student mental health and well-being.</p> <p>Offer practical resources and support opportunities to school staff to support their own well-being and the well-being of students.</p>
<b>Family Support, home visits, referral, and counseling</b>	<p>Seek input and guidance from families on how to best support students' mental health and well-being during the school year.</p> <p>Outreach to and connect with families in the community who need information and support such as health, Medicaid, and other community services.</p> <p>Prepare safety and other coronavirus information for caregivers in partnership with School-Based Health Centers.</p>
<b>Mental Health Services and Supports - Individual, family, group counseling, referrals, crisis management, assessment</b>	<p>Develop in collaboration with school staff a referral and communication process for identifying and addressing student mental health concerns.</p> <p>Assess already enrolled and new students who are referred for both mental health and well-being challenges and strengths and provide and/or refer to needed services and supports.</p> <p>Provide in-person or through tele-mental health individual, family, and group sessions for students at risk for or already displaying distress and/or challenging in their daily functioning.</p>

	Provide support for students in crisis (e.g., danger to self or others, death or loss of loved ones, homelessness, trauma)
<b>Mental Health Consultation, consultation to school-staff and community partners/providers</b>	<p>Consult with educators, administrators, health staff, and families on strategies, resources, and supports to address student distress and promote well-being</p> <p>Consult and partner with school staff, families, primary care, and community providers and programs around how to individualize support to meet the needs of students experiencing mental health concerns</p>
<b>SCHOOL BASED HEALTH CENTERS (SBHC)</b>	
<b>Provide leadership, guidance, and support for local school-based health center (SBHC) programs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic - Provision for available health care services to students, caregivers/guardians, and staff enrolled in the local SBHC Program</b>	<p>Traditional SBHC programs may provide continuity of care to students and families during COVID-19, including ongoing health education and health care services during the <b>re-starting</b> to schools.</p> <p>Services provided by traditional SBHC programs may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somatic health care,</li> <li>• <b>Behavioral Health (Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder),</b></li> <li>• Urgent care services,</li> <li>• Dental services, and</li> <li>• Eye care services if available.</li> </ul> <p>Promote effective communication between the school, student, and family as a sign of unity and togetherness. Promote health education for the student/family health care needs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General prevention education,</li> <li>• Proper hand washing techniques, and</li> <li>• Promote good hygiene Provide SBHC services information and enrollment packets to students and families. Effective collaboration and communication between SBHC programs and local primary care providers enhances continuity of care for students and families in the school setting.</li> </ul>
<b>SBHC using Telehealth Services</b>	<p>Use of telehealth to address student health care needs during the school day may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation of <b>caregivers/guardians</b> in the telehealth visit via a remote access invite from the telehealth originating site.</li> <li>• Telehealth visits provide immediate access to care including the recommended health services and prescribed treatment for students during the school day.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> The availability of telehealth services in schools promotes continuity of care for students with the expectation of the students' return to the classroom setting as recommended by the telehealth provider. Facilitate effective collaboration and communication with local primary care providers and local pediatricians regarding available school-based telehealth services.</p>