



2020 Cities Thrive Mental Health Coalition Monthly Call Series

Tuesday, September 22nd
2:15-3:30pm/Eastern Time

“Going Back to School: Ensuring Emotional Support for Teachers, Students, and Families”

Call-In: 347-719-7789 (No Pin)

PARTICIPANTS

New York City, NY – Bridge to School Plan

Presenter: Elizabeth Stranzl, Director of Policy, Division of School Climate & Wellness, NYC Department of Education

Description: *Bridge to School*, a Citywide initiative for the 2020-21 school year focused on the social and emotional wellbeing of students and adults in order to create a safe, supportive learning environment that confronts the trauma caused by the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, schools will be equipped to integrate trauma-informed practices into school reopening and build off of last year’s major expansion of mental health supports in schools. To enhance this key priority, the Fund for Public Schools has secured \$1.9 million in philanthropic funding from the Robin Hood, Gray, and Tiger foundations. These grants will help to equip school-based staff citywide with trauma-informed training, high quality resources, and ongoing support - all critical to effectively respond to students' social emotional needs in this challenging time. Already, 1,600 school leaders have completed this training, giving them skills to provide foundational classroom and school wide support and the ability to recognize when acute trauma requires a referral for more targeted support. Training will be made available to teachers at all schools. Available sessions include training on: Building capacity of school staff and school leaders to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and its impact on young people; Learning effective classroom and school-wide trauma informed care practices that align to existing social-emotional and mental health support systems used in the NYCDOE; Addressing trauma will be an ongoing need, and so the philanthropic support will also enable the DOE to partner with the Child Mind Institute to offer additional supports for school-based staff this fall, including webinars and workshops, videos and print materials to support social-emotional learning in the classroom, and a helpline for educators to receive additional guidance and support. The helpline will be available Monday through Friday, 8am to 8pm starting September 21st and these resources will remain available to educators through the end of 2020. Beyond training, and direct classroom support, the Department of Education is releasing the Bridge to School Resource Guide. This puts at educators’ fingertips grade-appropriate tools, like activities and lesson plans for both remote and in-person learning, that help students build coping skills, process grief, re-connect, and allow students to orient themselves to blended learning or online classroom during first the few weeks of school.

Chicago, IL - Successfully Learning at Home This Fall Framework (All-Virtual)

Presenter: Hellen Antonopoulos, Executive Director of Office of Social and Emotional Learning, Chicago Public Schools

Description: Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students will begin the coming school year learning at home. This framework gives CPS the flexibility to begin the school year learning at home and transition to hybrid learning once our public health experts determine it is safe to do so. We know children may experience a combination of



stress, fear, and anxiety as the school year approaches, and easing these feelings and building supportive learning environments will be critical to their success this coming school year. This year, CPS will offer additional mental health interventions and supports, introduce grief curriculum, expand small group trauma interventions, and provide virtual classroom-based activities for managing stress and anxiety. CPS will continue to be intentional about prioritizing social-emotional learning and sharing mental health resources with students and families throughout the year. Parents can contact their school social worker or counselor to request more information about these services or resources.

Washington, D.C – 24 Hour Parent and Family Support Line and Self-Care for Parents Initiative

Presenter: Barbara J. Bazron, Director, Department of Behavioral Health

Description: Parents who are dealing with stress as the school year begins can access free counseling and other mental health services through a 24-hour hotline. Licensed social workers, psychologists, and counselors offer guidance on handling family stressors and, if necessary, link parents to school-based clinicians or early-childhood specialists. These clinicians are also available to provide grief and trauma counseling for those who have lost loved ones as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Parents can access audio or virtual consultation support with a clinician for up to three sessions. The D.C. Department of Behavioral Health is providing these services, which are confidential and feature bilingual clinicians. It established the Mental Health Hotline in March 2020 early in the crisis to help struggling residents and have expanded this service to reach parents who may need support. Clinicians assigned to the program have experience with parents of children ranging in age from early childhood through high school. Residents can access the services by calling 1-888-793-4357. One of the components of this effort is Wellness Wednesdays, a weekly live online parent support group. Wellness Wednesdays occurs every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. These sessions are staffed by licensed clinicians and focus on building resiliency and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with other parents and share their experiences and mutual supports. Each week features a topic for discussion based on the Parent Café's five resiliency factors. These factors are resilience, relationships, knowledge, support and communication. Parent Café is an evidence-informed parent program developed by Be Strong Families.

Mental Health America - Back to School Toolkit

Presenter: Emily Skehill, Program Manager of Public Education and Awareness, Mental Health America

Description: Mental Health America releases an annual Back to School Toolkit to support school personnel, parents, and students' mental wellbeing during the return to school. This year's toolkit is themed *Coping During COVID* and addresses the loneliness, grief, and anxiety that many are feeling as we navigate the uncharted waters of COVID-19. Given that this distress can impact children's behavior and learning, the 2020 toolkit includes resources on recognizing mental health concerns in kids and teens, how teachers can protect their own mental health, handling the challenges of remote learning as a parent, and how kids can cope with change and worry. It is available to download for free at www.mhanational.org/backtoschool.