

Navigating Students' Return to School through a Trauma Invested Lens

Participant Handout

Objectives

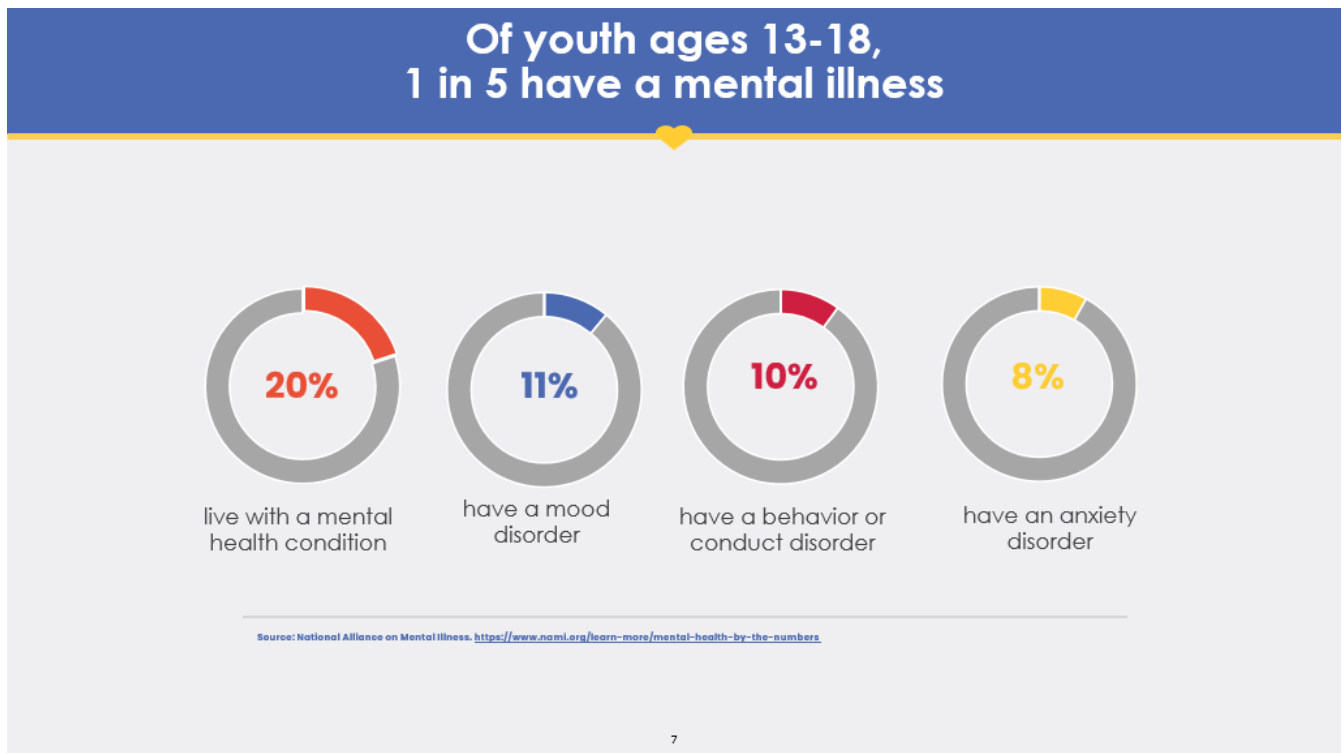
In this workshop, participants will:

- Gain knowledge related to the **increasing mental health challenges for our youth**.
- Develop an understanding of what **mental health warning signs and symptoms** to expect upon student return.
- Become familiar with **trauma invested practices**.
- Identify **strategies and next steps**.



Increasing Mental Health Challenges in Our Youth

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, there was a growing mental health epidemic among K-12 students.

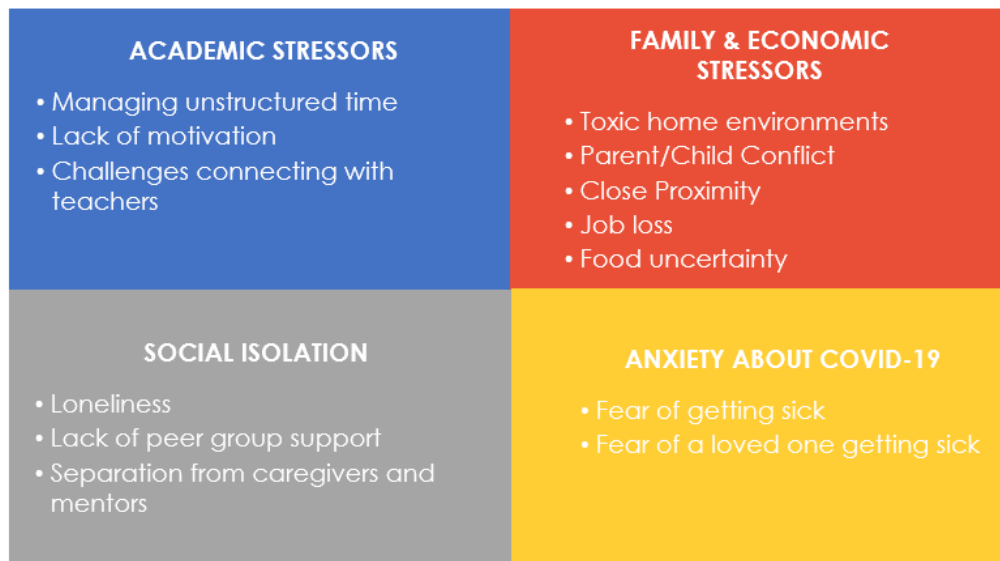




Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Family member's attempt or death by suicide
- Substance use problems
- Mental health challenges
- Instability due to caregiver separation or household members in jail or prison

Traumatic Impact of COVID-19



- The COVID-19 pandemic is considered a Universal ACE.



Mental Health Warning Signs and Symptoms

Students Returning to Full Time in Person Learning May Struggle With Stressors Related to Adjustment as well as Post-Pandemic Release.

Signs of Fears, Excessive Worry and Anxiety

Age Group	Reactions
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased fear of being alone • Increased bad dreams • Increase in or changes to of loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting • Changes in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors
School Age (ages 6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behaviors • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbances • Physical symptoms (headaches/stomach aches) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parent's attention • Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school
Adolescent (ages 13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches/stomach aches/rashes) • Sleep/appetite disturbances • Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Concerns about stigma and injustices • Avoiding/cutting virtual school

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



Impact of Traumatic Stress

- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Difficulty regulating their emotions and focusing on learning
- Lack of skills necessary to regulate their behaviors and recognize their own actions
- Inflexibility and outbursts for no apparent reason
- Increased use of health services, including mental health services
- Increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long term health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease
- Trauma is a risk factor for nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders



Trauma Invested Practices

Trauma Invested Practices

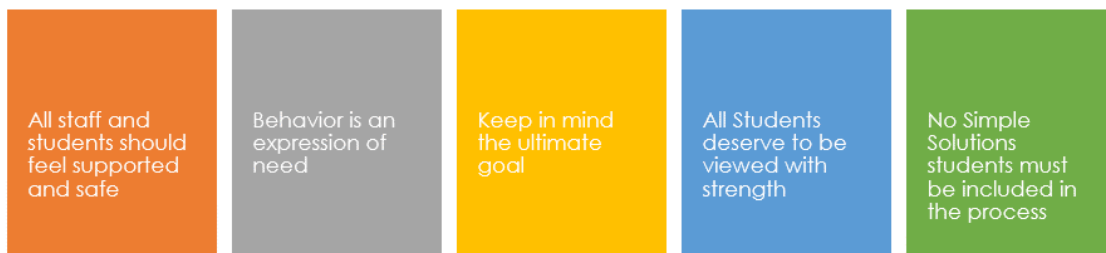
- Why is this work important to you?
- Is this an issue I can't address or won't address?
- What assumptions are being made in this situation? -OR- What assumptions are others making? (Ex.) Student tells you something and your mind jumps to...."That's an excuse, the student is trying to get out of this again" etc.
- Needs vs. Behaviors Focused (Ex.) Are you looking for unmet needs or getting caught up in how the student is delivering the message?



Common Student Needs Expressed

- Emotional
- Connection
- Physical
- Need for Control

Keys to Remember





Strategies

1. **Take Your Own Pulse:** Find your calm. Practice your own regulation and self-care and model usage to your students.
2. **Routines:** Routines provide increased comfort and are of even more importance during times of stress.
3. **Structure:** Structuring the student's day ahead of time helps reduce anxiety. Structure provides the student with a sense of boundary and control. Schedules need to be readily accessible, visible, and understandable.
4. **Validation:** Acknowledge that things are not fair, that we are all experiencing losses, and that things are difficult. Validate all emotions, thoughts, and experiences.



The Three Rs to Intervention

- **Relationship:** Just one safe, connected adult can help build resilience in a student
- **Responsibility:** Follow through with what you say or promise and express the importance of following through even in difficult times
- **Regulation:** Emotion Regulation Strategies start in the body and move to the mind.



Reaching Students

- Identify what need a behavior is expressing
- See the inherent worth in each student and build from their strengths
- Remember there is no learning that can take place if students do not feel safe
- Work from a team perspective
- Consider is a basic need not being met
- Give students grace



Resources

- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990
- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline texting TalkWithUS to 66746
- The Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK
- Make a list of your own local resources (Hot lines, Warm lines, Crisis Response)
- Effective School Solutions

Take the Survey

- Please give us feedback.
- Scan the icon in your handout.
- Or go to:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JBH-WL9S>

