

Mental Health Pulse: What to Expect from Students Upon Returning to School

Participants Guide

OBJECTIVES

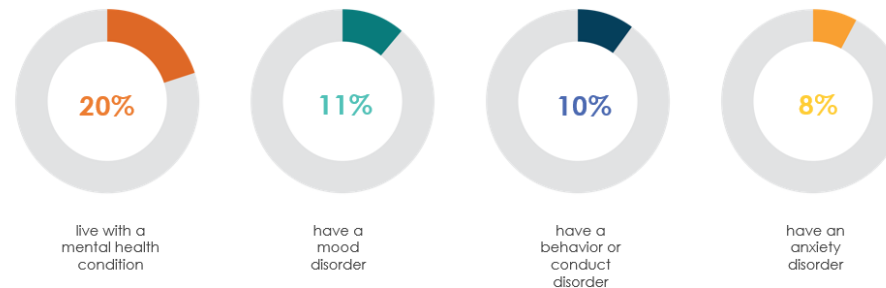
Upon completion of this presentation, participants will:

1. Gain knowledge related to the **increasing mental health challenges for our youth.**
2. Develop an understanding of what **mental health warning signs and symptoms**, to expect during re-acclimation
3. Identify **Strategies and Next Steps**



INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN YOUTH

Of Youth Ages 13-18, 1 in 5 Have a Mental Illness

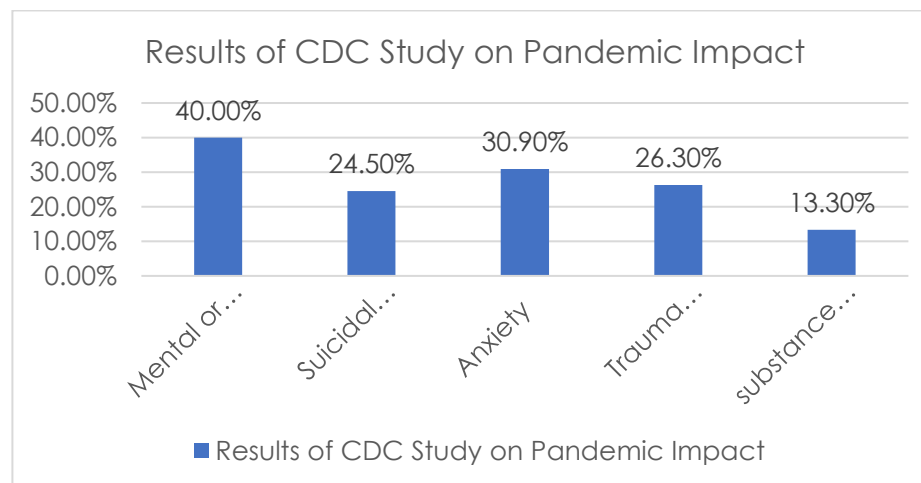


**TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF COVID**

ACADEMIC STRESSORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing unstructured time• Lack of motivation• Challenges connecting with teachers
SOCIAL ISOLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loneliness• Lack of peer group support• Separation from caregivers and mentors
FAMILY & ECONOMIC STRESSORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toxic home environments• Parent/Child Conflict• Close Proximity• Job loss• Food uncertainty
ANXIETY ABOUT COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear of getting sick• Fear of a loved one getting sick



IMPACT OF COVID ON MENTAL HEALTH



IMPACT ON OUR EARLIEST LEARNERS (UNDER AGE 6)

Pre-Pandemic	Pandemic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence rates of mental health problems in children ages birth through five range from 16 to 21% (Egger & Angold, 2006; Lavigne et al., 1996). 0.7% of preschool children are expelled from preschool due to behavioral problems each year. The risk of expulsion increases significantly for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insurance claims for mental health related visits for children aged 5-11 increased by 24% between March and August of 2019-2020. Half of all parents of children under age 5 report experiencing higher levels of stress during COVID-19, which enhances their child's

<p>those children whose preschool does not provide on-site mental health services (Gilliam, 2005).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to kindergarten teachers, 35% of American children reach kindergarten unprepared to learn (Boyer, 1991).	<p>risk for exposure to family adversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The much-needed responses, such as school restrictions and social isolation, used to mitigate the threat of the pandemic can also endanger child growth and development. These tools contribute to parental stress which in turn contributes to child stress.
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TRAUMATIC STRESS DURING COVID

Like adults, children are experiencing new or intensified stressors as a result of the pandemic, that include:

- Isolation
- Loss of Routines (rituals)
- Separation from Friends and Family
- Substance Abuse (their own or Caregivers)
- Food insecurity
- Job loss (Caregiver)
- Bereavement: Loss of parent or loved one
- Extreme illness in the household
- Exposure to abuse
- Traumatic anniversaries



WHAT TO EXPECT?

As this is truly uncharted territory, we cannot definitively know what to expect, however based on historical research we can make some educated assumptions.

- Children don't always know how to handle complex emotions associated with stress, so they rely on behaviors as both a coping mechanism and a signal to others that something isn't right.
- For those who have experienced prolonged or chronic stressors, behaviors may not appear until the child returns to a safe or stable environment.
- For many children, school is their safe space. It is here they will feel safe enough to express and explore feeling of anxiety, stress, and trauma.



MENTAL HEALTH WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Age Group	Reaction
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)

- 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



STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS

Where to Start?

- While we may be tempted to assume that we know what another needs, it is best to hear from them directly.
- Encourage the development of the following social-emotional areas: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, and relationship skills by asking the following questions:
 - What do **you** need?
 - Help **me** to understand?
 - How can **I** help?



3 WAYS TO SUPPORT

1. **Safety:** We ALL need to feel safe. One way we can do this is through our safety rules, procedures and policies.
 - Examples:
 - ✓ Social distancing, OSHA/Safety/Hazards/Cleaning Procedures, masks.
 - ✓ What is your Town/home/school/districts safety measures?
2. **Security:** A familiar object, routine, or set of rituals that function as a source of comfort.
 - Examples:
 - ✓ Daily routines (sleep and wake times, mealtimes, work times) and schedules

Effective School Solutions

- ✓ What are your family/children daily routines and schedules?
- 3. **Confidence:** A confident adult/caregiver has a positive impact on their child's achievement, attitude, affective and even socio-emotional growth. Children look to the adults in their lives for guidance on how to respond to stressful situations. When those in leadership roles are dysregulated, those under their care or supervision will also become dysregulated.
 - Examples:
 - ✓ First responders, Medical professionals, Teachers, Parents, Caregivers.



STRATEGIES

STRATEGY	NOTES
Take Your Own Pulse	
Routines	
Structure	
Validation	

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