

F A L L 2 0 2 0

Back-to-School During COVID-19

Connecting Students and Schools
with Tele-Mental Health Services



Back-to-School During COVID-19

Connecting Students and Schools with Tele-Mental Health Services

Planning for the 2020-2021 pandemic school year poses unprecedented challenges to schools, students, and families. Students and their parents and caregivers are experiencing significant stress as they prepare for yet another period of transition and uncertainty. Many students will be returning to school or starting a virtual classroom experience with heightened social-emotional needs. Schools, parents, and other supportive individuals must be ready to address these behavioral health challenges.

Ohio's community mental health agencies are here to help.



How Students Are Feeling

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, students and their families have faced numerous challenges. Many parents lost their jobs, families have downsized to smaller homes, some have been infected with COVID-19, and sadly, over 3,700 Ohioans have died from the virus. Many young adults also lost their job or struggled to find stable employment over the summer. These economic factors may have led to some children and young adults experiencing malnourishment, homelessness, and ultimately trauma. Sadly, while school has been closed since last Spring, many of these families have fallen through the cracks and are not yet referred to community-based services for support.

Further, for many children, the summer of 2020 was the loneliest experience of their life. Loneliness is a common side effect of sheltering in place and social distancing for all people, but can be exacerbated in children. Loss of routine as well as time spent socializing can have negative impacts on self-esteem, social-emotional skills, and feelings of despair.

As schools reopen this Fall, whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid, students will experience another major life transition. Given the challenges students faced over the Spring and Summer, schools, parents, and caregivers need to be ready to support students emotionally in order to propel them toward academic success.

Ohio's network of community mental health agencies are poised to work directly with schools, students, and their families – including through telehealth and other virtual platforms.

Addressing Student Mental Health Needs

We know that while mental health problems already affect one in six children (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016), rates may continue to rise as a result of COVID-19. Specifically, a higher number of children are at risk for developing:



Support services to students are critical in this time of uncertainty and heightened concern. The **Reset, Restart Plan** recently released by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) identifies supporting “the social, emotional, physical and behavioral health of students, educators and staff” as well as prioritizing “the needs of the most vulnerable students and staff” as two of its guiding principles. In order for students to be successful, the social-emotional health and overall wellness of students must be a top priority.

Community mental health agencies employ therapists, nurses, psychiatrists, and paraprofessionals who can provide services to students in school, in their homes, or in other community settings.

Embracing Telehealth and Virtual Platforms

Since last Spring, the use of telehealth has skyrocketed among health care providers of all types in Ohio, including mental health practitioners. Today, mental health services can be provided to new and existing clients through telehealth. Tele-mental health services are covered benefits of Ohio's Medicaid program as well as private health insurance plans.

Many children already receiving mental health services have adjusted to receiving all or a portion of their care virtually. For some, these services may have been interrupted during the onset of COVID-19 spread and need to be restarted. Families are encouraged to contact their existing mental health provider to inquire about telehealth opportunities.

Today, it is easier than ever before to access mental health care through telehealth. New government and health insurance rules permit various technology platforms to be used, such as a *Facetime*, *Zoom*, and *Skype*. For consumers, some home internet and phone service providers are temporarily providing free and reduced services, expanding their offerings, and temporarily waiving fees so more people have access to Wi-Fi and broadband. And during August 2020, the State of Ohio announced a \$50 million grant to school districts that need help providing internet access to students.

Call to Action for Schools

Schools can collaborate with community mental health agencies to provide services for students and consultation for staff regarding behavior supports and interventions. Mental health services are available to be provided in schools, in homes, in other community settings, and virtually. Securing a reliable referral pathway for students to receive ongoing mental health care is a critical goal for schools.

Community mental health agencies are positioned to take the lead in meeting the mental health needs of students.



Get Connected

The Ohio Children's Alliance has a network of community mental health agencies located in every region of Ohio that are available to serve children, families, and schools. These agencies can provide mental health services virtually, in school, home, or other community settings. Wait times for initial appointments are short and some agencies even offer same-day availability.

Northwest

[Community Teaching Homes, Inc.](#)
[Boundless](#)
[Genacross](#)
[Marsh Foundation](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[Ohio Mentor](#)
[SAFY](#)

West Central

[Bair Foundation Child and Family Ministries, The](#)
[Boundless](#)
[Choices, Inc. Children Having Options in Caring](#)
[Environment](#)
[Eastway Behavioral Healthcare](#)
[Isaiah's Place](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[Necco](#)
[Oesterlen Services for Youth](#)
[Ohio Mentor](#)
[SAFY](#)
[South Community](#)
[St. Joseph Orphanage](#)

Southwest

[Beechacres](#)
[Bair Foundation Child and Family Ministries, The](#)
[Buckeye Ranch, The](#)
[Children's Home of Cincinnati](#)
[Choices, Inc. Children Having Options in Caring](#)
[Environment](#)
[Focus on Youth](#)
[Lighthouse Youth and Family Services](#)
[Mayo Home for Youth Development](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[Necco](#)
[Ohio Mentor](#)
[Positive Leaps](#)
[Pressley Ridge](#)
[SAFY](#)
[St. Aloysius](#)
[St. Joseph Orphanage](#)

Central

[Abraxas](#)
[Adriel](#)
[Bair Foundation Child and Family Ministries, The](#)
[Boundless](#)
[Buckeye Ranch, The](#)
[Daybreak Counseling](#)
[Integrated Services for Behavioral Health](#)
[Ohio Mentor](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[Necco](#)
[SAFY](#)
[Southeast Healthcare](#)
[St. Vincent Family Center](#)
[UMCH Family Services](#)
[ViaQuest, Inc.](#)

Northeast

[Bair Foundation Child and Family Ministries, The](#)
[Beech Brook](#)
[Boundless](#)
[Cadence Care Network](#)
[Christian's Children's Home of Ohio](#)
[Chrysalis Family Solutions](#)
[Family Pride Northeast Ohio](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[New Beginnings Residential Treatment Center, LLC](#)
[Ohio Mentor](#)
[Pressley Ridge](#)
[Psycare](#)
[SAFY](#)
[Shelter Care](#)
[Village Network, The](#)

Southeast

[Boundless](#)
[Integrated Services for Behavioral Health](#)
[National Youth Advocate Program](#)
[Necco](#)
[Village Network, The](#)

Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child
and family service providers

Ohio Children's Alliance

Ph: (614) 461-0014

2600 Corporate Exchange Drive
Suite 180
Columbus, OH 43231

ohiochildrensalliance.org



Child & Family Health Collaborative of Ohio

Ph: (614) 461-0014

2600 Corporate Exchange Drive
Suite 180
Columbus, OH 43231

ohiochildrensalliance.org/collaborative

Resources

- [National Center for School Mental Health \(NCSMH\) COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Ohio Department of Education Reset and Restart: Education Planning for Ohio Schools and Districts](#)
- [Mental Health Technology Transfer Center \(MHTTC\) Telehealth Toolbox for School Personnel](#)
- [Kaiser Permanente: Thriving Schools: Resources for Schools and Families Impacted by COVID-19](#)
- [Neurosequential Network: Neurosequential COVID-19 Resources](#)

Generous Support for the Publication Provided By:

