Mental Health in Schools: Voices From the Field

*SDCOE in partnership with San Diego County Behavioral Health held a <u>community conversation</u> in February 2021 with **100 participants** representing **21 county school districts** to <u>discuss mental health challenges and needs</u> related to **mental health** and **suicide prevention** as schools reopen.*

The Universal Message …We Must Prioritize Student, Staff and Family Mental & Emotional Health

Considerations as Schools Reopen

Anxiety

Student, staff and parent anxiety is a major concern. The increased trauma, grief, social stressors and uncertainties of reopening schools are causing high levels of anxiety. Considerations need to be taken in to account that a balance between academics and mental wellness be made.

Connectivity

Students have lost social connectivity, and for many engagement and motivation in school have suffered. Time, resources and intentional actions need to be spent on building relationships and fostering engaging school climates.

Support

The growing mental health needs, lack of support and stigma associated with receiving services were all stated concerns. All youth mental health serving agencies and organization need to work together to streamline referral processes and meet the needs of students mental health.

Enhancing Suicide Prevention Efforts

Prevention

- Need for increased district wide communication and coordination of training efforts
- Offer information, training and resources for parents
- Consistent distribution of resources, toolkits, and curriculum throughout year

Intervention

- Protocols and practices in place for student assessments ensuring comprehensive care that includes parents
- Evidence based risk assessment tool that is universally shared and used across all districts and schools

Postvention

- This was identified as the largest area of growth for districts
- Increase understanding and planning around best practices
- Increase awareness and usage of toolkits, templates and checklists