

# 11. Mental Health

**Team Leader(s):** Djuana Wilson, James Clark

**Task Force Members:** Rodney Gilmore, Nicole Brown, Anita Reynolds, Pamela Parsley, Sheena Burke, Edward Count, Jasmin Sowell, Peter LaDuca, Regina Edgeworth, Keesha Keller, Thurston O’Neal, Donna Raphael, Erica Deans, Heather Cuccia, Madeline Baez, Maria Junior, Donette Williams, Diane Petito, Lyndell Ray, Rochelle Argroe

Considerations	Plan 1 – Return to School	Plan 2 – Blended & Remote
<b>Upon arrival back to school both students and staff may require mental health services</b>		
<p><b>Potential issues to think about:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss/illness of parents, grandparents, friends, school members, etc.</li> <li>- Behind on schoolwork/classwork</li> <li>- Having to send child back to school</li> <li>- Secondary traumas</li> <li>- Increased anxiety/stress</li> <li>- Increase in abusive tendencies</li> <li>- Isolated/lonely</li> <li>- Change in routine</li> <li>- Relocation</li> <li>- Unemployment situation/job loss</li> <li>- News, constant bad news</li> <li>- Previous mental health issues worsening</li> <li>- Frustration with use/knowledge of remote technology</li> <li>- Family job loss</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID</li> <li>- Children and teens</li> <li>- People who are helping with the response of COVID, like doctors, other health care providers and first responders</li> <li>- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use</li> </ul>		

<p><b>Emotional reactions to coming out of quarantine may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine</li> <li>- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones</li> <li>- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID</li> <li>- Sadness, anger or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious</li> <li>- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine</li> <li>- Other emotional of health changes</li> <li>- Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine</li> <li>- Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with COVID calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Symptoms to watch for may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children</li> <li>- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (toileting accidents or bed wetting)</li> <li>- Excessive worry or sadness</li> <li>- Unhealthy sleeping or eating habits</li> <li>- Irritability and "acting out" behaviors in teens</li> <li>- Poor school performance and avoiding school</li> <li>- Difficulty with attention and concentration</li> <li>- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past</li> </ul>		



## Meeting Minutes

### 11. Mental Health Groups A and B (Round 2)

July 1, 2020 9:00 a.m.

**Attendees:** James Clark, Dorothy Butler Crayton, Thurston O'Neal, Donna Raphael, Winsome Brown-Cooke, Madeline Baez, Desiree Uzzell, Nicole Brown, 1-917-515-1892, Djuana Wilson, Lyndell Ray, Desiree Maurice, Danielle Curio, Gaffney, Joelle Day, Anita Reynolds, Pamela Green, Heather Cuccia

James Clark opened the meeting by saying that even when we go back to brick and mortar learning that we should continue to use ZOOM as a platform for meetings, as it still protects us. By COB tomorrow we will have gone through all the topics that we need to address. Next week we will put together what the plans will look like. We are still waiting for guidance from the governor as to what will happen in the fall. School openings are part of Phase 4. I have looked at national plans, as well as local plans for reopening and all plans discuss the importance of Mental Health. For students as well as staff. School opening in September will be very complex. Personally, I don't see us being ready to open. Maybe rural areas, but not urban.

What will we do when we come back to school for students, staff, parents and community members? People are suffering the loss of loved ones, job loss, isolation, increased anxiety, the state of America – protests and the Black Lives Matter movement. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Students with prior issues will be more prone. We need to talk about what is in place now for and what we will need in September whether we go live or virtual.

**DW:** We are in the process of putting together a district wide SEL team. I had a meeting with the social workers and psychologists yesterday about BLM. We need to have two plans in place; one if we return, another if we do not. We should be finished in about two weeks

**DBC:** (Social Worker at Front Street) We need to plan for students as well as staff. The staff is also dealing with the BLM and the pandemic issues. We had a meeting with the staff at the beginning of the pandemic. When BLM came up we had another one. We have to make sure our adults have support as well

**TO: (Director of Hempstead Preventive Coalition) We started our organization about 10 months ago. We now have over 30 organizations involved. For me to assist, please tell me what you need. We have several mental health providers. We don't want to step on any toes or duplicate efforts but would be happy to work alongside you to support your efforts. Please tell me what would work best**

**WBC: (Social Worker) It is hard to answer that question now. I am the liaison to BOCES and Nassau County. Can we meet to discuss how we can work together?**

**TO: I would love to. We are all new to this. Virtual or in-person. We can do both**

**WBC: Great!**

**(TO: HPC [toneal@fcali.org](mailto:toneal@fcali.org) (631) 294-6875)**

**JC: What will be different about the support that we will need for the young people?**

**MB: (AP Prospect) A few weeks ago, parents and children came in to pick up their belongings. I noticed that most of the Pre-K and K kids were scared. Only one ran up and hugged the TA**

**HC: My niece and nephew (10yrs and 6yrs) are also scared. They said that they are nervous about going back to school, probably the same concern every child has. We need to look into how COVID affects the family, mentally and physically. My whole family is involved in education. I am the only one in healthcare. Our community organization rolled out a program regarding how COVID affects children and their families. We would like the opportunity for access to care and testing and social detriments to health. I would like the opportunity to do what I can to support you**

**(HC: Community Engagement Specialist – LI 100 Church Street NY, NY 10007  
Cell: (917) 515-1892 [www.healthfirst.org](http://www.healthfirst.org))**

**WBC: DW created a district-wide mental health team comprised of social workers and psychologist. We can keep you abreast of the contractual obligations to bring in community organizations**

**JD: We also have a lot of kids who are nervous about coming back to school. The school they left will not be the same they return to**

**DBC: School will not be the same as when they left**

**NB: That is key. The instructional staff will need much education and guidance on this. How will we maintain social distancing without hurting their feelings? How do we prepare them to handle this?**

**DM: What about children entering school for the first time? We need resources to train parents and students. Are there resources to make the transition easier? How will we educate parents to make the transition easier?**

**DR: (FCA) I mostly work with high school and middle school students. Having community organizations are a big part of this. We need to educate parents. Many have not accepted the precautions that are needed, BLM is another factor. What have they been doing in isolation? The HS and MS students are very different from elementary. We want to work alongside you and not duplicate efforts**

**(DR: [DWRaphael@fcali.org](mailto:DWRaphael@fcali.org) (516) 644-7528)**

**JC: When kids come back to school it will certainly be very different. What materials will we need – signage, posters, etc.?**

**DBC: We need clarity on what we should and should not be doing. Posters and constant reminders. We must do it with positivity. Let's go wash our hands!! I love your mask!! Have them create or decorate their own mask**

**(DU: We need sensitivity training and consistency)**

**LR: (Retired teacher) The entire school community will need support. You should begin the day with a calming circle activity. We need to show unity and**

**give the students the ability to verbalize their feelings/anxiety they may be having. Meditation perhaps for relaxation?**

**WBC: I totally agree with you. We have the "Restarted Circle". We do it and it works great**

**(AR: Circle works great)**

**DM: We have to schedule time for it. Allot a certain amount of time for it every day so it doesn't get forgotten about or pushed to the side. Even high school kids will benefit from this**

**(MB: We use the Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting Time)**

**HC: Can a survival packet go out to all students before they return to school?**

**WBC: Each building has a health and safety team and we have discussed this. Each building is different**

**MB: Another challenge. Facemasks don't let the children see your smile, your compassion. If they had them, clear masks would be good**

**JC: There are clear masks. We could look into this and ask parents to purchase for their kids. We are asking these kids to do the opposite of everything we have ever taught them. As far as the circles go, if we don't come back until January, can we do it remotely?**

**WBC: Yes. We were doing the circles during the pandemic. I, as a social worker, was coming into each virtual classroom on a regular basis. I will continue to do this.**

**(DM: Some masks have a smile on them. And we were doing the circle virtually as well.)**

**NB: A lot of teachers asked why social workers came into the class. We need to establish clear expectations about this. We need to schedule it and make it part of the culture**

**NC: What is being done on the bereavement counseling level? How will that be addressed?**

**DBC: We have always dealt with bereavement**

**JC: Thank you for your time and excellent suggestions and rich discussion. I feel very comfortable regarding mental health if we have to open in September.**

## Meeting Minutes

### 11. Mental Health Groups C and D (Round 2)

July 1, 2020 10:00 a.m.

**Attendees:** James Clark, Thurston O'Neal, Donna Raphael, Erika Dean, Gabrielle Kirby, Sheena Burke, Jasmin Sowell, Claudia (NP at Hempstead Health Center – HHS), Maria Junior, Diane Petito, Rodney Gilmore, arochc01, Keesha Keller

James Clark opened the meeting by giving an update about what was discussed at the 9:00 Mental Health meeting. Changing the culture about how school is conducted, training and support, signage, friendly masks, anxiety, loss of loved ones. We spoke about what we need to do for our students now and what will need to be done when we return.

While we are still waiting for guidance from the governor, we have to put two plans in place. One, if we have a remote opening and secondly, if we return to a brick and mortar opening in September. What needs to be done to address this?

**TO: (Dir. of HPC)** We deal with mental health, substance abuse among other things. Anything that improves the lives of our residents. We would like to offer assistance to the social workers and psychologists in whatever way fits best. We don't want to overstep, we will work alongside of you

**JC:** We need to deal with the emotional reaction that the students, and staff, will have coming out of quarantine. What are the symptoms to look out for? What kind of service do we need to provide?

**RG:** Human Resources offers support for district employees. We have seen a rise in the number of people that have used these resources since COVID.

**RG to TO:** What kind of services can you offer our staff? Are they free of charge?

**TO:** EAP services for employees. Sometimes employees don't want to use their employers' services for fear of confidentiality. There are services that staff can use with their insurance. We can also design something that is free of charge

for your district. We can do 1:1 counseling with insurance or a sliding scale if they don't want to use insurance. We will provide whatever the district needs.

(HPC – [toneal@fcali.org](mailto:toneal@fcali.org) (631) 294-6875)

DP: (Coach for the HHS based health center) We provide services to HHS students. We can also provide to any student that requires it. I will send you my contact info

(DP: HHS Health Center (516) 434-4251)

JC: Fear, worry, loss of loved ones. How do we address these issues?

GK: (part of the crisis committee at ABGS) Job loss, domestic violence, etc. Students must be identified when they come in. They need routines and rituals. A five-minute morning ritual to talk would be good. Then we can reach out to these students. We can share this plan with you. We have done brick and mortar as well as a remote plan

SB: "Responsive Classroom". That is what we use. It takes about 15 minutes. It can be done in a classroom or remotely. My teachers did it during the pandemic. Lots of issues come out during this time. It works. It allows them to share in a comfortable setting. The staff will need support as well. We must establish teams or buddies. Perhaps a monthly meditation session to de-stress, massages in an informal setting

GK: I agree. And self-care

SB: Some teachers did breathing exercises with the children. And coping skills

KK: We brought someone in to do meditation during a faculty meeting. Some teachers shared that with students. "Snack and Chat" – a virtual program we did in the evening with school psychologist. Students bring a snack and talk

JC: Can all these programs be done remotely?

SB: Absolutely! You can also expand on this to work with parents

**JC: Symptoms we need to watch out for: crying, irritability, behavior issues, etc. How do we address these, both live and remote?**

**SB: That is not so different than what we do daily. Teachers are in-tune to this. We are going to have a lot of separation anxiety when they return. We have to make the children feel safe. It's about being aware of your students and providing guidelines/key strategies for teachers as to what to look out for. Administration should be in tune to their staff**

**GK: Feeling safe is key! Routines and rituals must be followed. Send out what you will be doing ahead of time so they know what to expect**

**MJ: (social worker at HHS) Students like to have individual attention. Reach out to them and let them know that you are there for them**

**DP: (HHS health coordinator) We are here year-round. We tried to reach out to all the students during the time away. So many parents were happy to hear from the school. We will continue to reach out over the summer**

**JC: What about substance abuse?**

**TO: According to OASAS and CADCA there will be an uptick in substance use. What does the district have in place now? We are starting educational campaigns. "Just Say No" doesn't work. We need to provide substance-free activities for the students to participate in**

**DR: I agree that substance abuse is on the rise. We have programs, as well, at the school**

**JC: What specifically needs to be addressed for students to come back into the building?**

**SB: Adjusting. They now have to deal with not having the same socialization that they had in the past. Social distance, masks. We need to help kids understand this and accept it**

**KK:** I agree. The elementary kids, especially, will be dealing with separation anxiety. They need hugs from us and friends. The staff is going to have a hard time with this, too

**MJ:** Parents are also dealing with fears of sending their kids back to school. We need to reassure them that their children will be safe

**ED:** You need to start scheduling early this year. You may need to contact the student to get them re-engaged after being away for so long (especially those who viewed this as a vacation). We also need to practice patience. A lot of families did not enforce the use of masks, although a lot did.

**SB:** The mental health issue will be here whether we are here or remote. We have to start now. We also had kids who were sent somewhere else because their parents had to work. That has been especially hard on them

**JS:** We have Derner Health Services at the middle school. [dernerhempsteadclinic@hempsteadschools.org](mailto:dernerhempsteadclinic@hempsteadschools.org). They are still taking referrals and will service the entire district. You need to send them parent contact information and the student's name. Their info is on the ABGS website

**JC:** Thank you all for attending. Next week we will start putting all this information together. We are lucky to have such good staff working on this