

Addressing Barriers to Learning

Why Should Schools Be Concerned About Mental Health?

[http://wcco.com/video/?id=38140@
wcco.dayport.com](http://wcco.com/video/?id=38140@wcco.dayport.com)

“School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the schools must meet the challenge.”

Carnegie Council Task Force on
Education of Young Adolescents (1989)

Many are in Need

- MECA Study (Methodology for Epidemiology of Mental Disorders in Children and Adolescents) estimated that almost 21 percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 had a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder associated with at least minimum impairment

Many are in Need

- The Surgeon General report on Mental Health states that:
 - “one in five children and adolescents exhibit signs and symptoms of a DSM-IV disorder during the course of a year” and that 5% of all children experience “extreme functional impairment”
 - 6-9 million children with serious emotional disturbances are not receiving the help they need—especially those from low income families

Minnesota Survey Data


➤ Statewide:

- 14% of 9th graders reported that were “sad all or most of the time in the past month” (the rate for girls was double that of boys)
- 14.7% of 9th graders reported feeling “discouraged or hopeless—extremely so or quite a bit—in the past month” (again, the rate for girls was double that of boys)

Minnesota Survey Data

- 17.3% of 9th graders had suicidal thoughts in the past year (21.9% for girls, 10.6% for boys)
- 3.8% of 9th graders reported trying to kill themselves in the past year (4.9% for girls, 2.7% for boys)

How Do Mental Health Issues Affect Education?

- Decreased productivity
 - Poor test performance
 - Absenteeism
 - Acting out behavior
 - Disrupting learning of others
 - Apathy
 - Withdrawal
- 

Current Approaches

- Most school system's use approaches that address the observable behaviors of the student (tip of the iceberg)
 - Discipline system
 - Referral for assessment
 - Allow students to fail—assume lack of motivation

Best Practice?

- Combination approach
 - Comprehensive assessment of mental health issues
 - Environmental assessment
 - Review of teaching and intervention practices
- Development of individual plan (school, home, service providers, medical professionals, etc)
 - Parents need to understand that schools cannot assume all of the responsibility for treatment
 - Collaborating with competent outside resources can have a powerful impact on student improvement

Desired Outcomes

- Fewer placements in hospitals, residential settings, or restrictive school placements
- Decreased costs
- Reduction in behavioral issues
- Increased test results
- Increased graduation rates
- Healthier students and families
- Improved relationships with families

One Example

- 13 year old student with combined total of 26 different MH diagnoses
 - Had never completed a full year in a regular school
 - Parent had significant trust issues with schools
 - In 2003-04 school year cost the district over \$90,000 for placement in a specialized school (includes transportation)

One Example

- 2004-05 Creation of PREP program
 - One Teacher
 - Two Paraprofessionals
 - On-site Mental Health Services
 - Psychiatric Assessment/Consultation
 - Specifically Designed Classroom
 - Cost for initial year of program \$190,000.00
 - Approximately 31,700 per student (6 students)
 - Cost for current year of program \$135,000.00
 - Approximately 16,875.00 per student (8 students)