Building Connections for Youth

Annual Health Summit – The Hidden Pandemic
La Crosse – April 22, 2022
Building Connections for Youth

- About OCMH
- How are Wisconsin Kids Doing?
- Pandemic Effect
- Connections
- What We Can Do
OCMH Vision

Wisconsin’s children are safe, nurtured and supported to achieve their optimal mental health and well-being. Systems are family-friendly, easy to navigate, equitable, and inclusive of all people.
Our Charge

• Study, recommend ways, and coordinate initiatives to improve the integration across state agencies of mental health services
• Monitor data related to children’s mental health and well-being

Our Values

• Collaborative across systems
• Data driven
• Family and youth guided
• Promote inclusivity and equity among all stakeholders
Collective Impact

Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of people from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific, complex social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.

5 Characteristics of Collective Impact

- **Common Agenda**
  - Keeps all parties moving towards the same goal

- **Common Progress Measures**
  - Measures that get to the TRUE outcome

- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities**
  - Each expertise is leveraged as part of the overall

- **Communications**
  - This allows a culture of collaboration

- **Backbone Organization**
  - Takes on the role of managing collaboration
Building Emotional Well-Being Through Strong Foundations
How Are Wisconsin Kids Doing?
Making and Keeping Friends

Ages 6 - 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>US CURRENT</th>
<th>WI BASELINE</th>
<th>WI CURRENT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with social skills</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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More kids ages 6-17 are having difficulty making and keeping friends
Anxiety, Depression & Self-Harm

Ages 13 - 18

Source: Wisconsin High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019
Suicide

Deaths per 100,000 Ages 15-19

Trends in Reported Suicide Attempts

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Kids lacking Social Connections

Percentage of kids in Wisconsin who are not socially connected, 2018/2019:

- 17% is not engaged in school
- 23% has difficulty making and keeping friends
- 37% family does not always share ideas well
- 40% does not live in a supportive neighborhood
- 55% does not engage in community service
Connections are Critical

It is especially important for a teenager’s physical and psychological health to be part of a social network beyond their family. As they develop their own identity, peers offer support and relief from depression, anxiety, and stress.
Pandemic Effect
Parental Stress

- Adult mental health needs are down from earlier points in the pandemic but still high
- Almost half of Wisconsin parents reported frequently feeling down, depressed, or hopeless
Pandemic Effect

Wisconsin is one of the TOP 5 states for having the most insurance claims submitted for intentional self-harm injuries during the pandemic.

Insurance companies report a 100% increase in the percentage of self-harm, substance use, and mental health claims for teens in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Pandemic Effect

- More teen girls (ages 12-17) treated for suicide attempts than before the pandemic
- At least one-third of Wisconsin’s emerging adults (ages 18-24) experience anxiety

*provisional 2021 Emergency Department data*
Summary Of Key Findings For High School

• High levels of stress, anxiety, and depression
• Significant challenges with virtual learning environments
  • Feeling “forgotten”; increased workloads, yet limited help
• Lack of connectedness to school, teachers, and friends
• Students have heightened expectations of their teachers
  • Loss of spontaneous interactions; need reassurance, and support
• Limited awareness of mental health resources
• Stigma, skepticism, and concerns about confidentiality are barriers to accessing mental health and wellness resources
• Perceived increases in substance use among peers
• Despite challenges, students have developed new coping skills and ways to be resilient
Youth Mental Health Crisis

U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory & Report

President Biden Announces Strategy to Address National Mental Health Crisis

Gov Evers’ Get Kids Ahead Initiative

- $15 million of flexible funding for school mental health
- Every public school district can opt in to receive $10,000 plus an additional amount based on their total number of students.
Kids Across the Lifespan are Struggling

Unrecognized mental health issues contributing to preschool expulsions

Losing the ability to make and maintain relationships

Increasing anxiety, depression & lack of belonging are contributing to teen suicide rate

Need the support of caring adults to launch and be mentally healthy
What’s the One Thing?
**Social Connectedness of Youth**

**Definition:**
Youth are socially connected when they are actively engaged in positive relationships where they feel they belong, are safe, cared for, valued, and supported.
Social Connectedness of Youth

**Outer circle:**
Represents array of OCMH network working in CMH

**Inside circle:**
5 categories of Social Connectedness of Youth

**Initial areas of focus/new teams:**
- Family
- Supportive Adult
- Cultural Identity/Community
# Social Connectedness Impact Team Visions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection Category</th>
<th>Vision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Children have warm, positive relationships with their family that make them feel like they belong, are safe, cared for, valued, and supported.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive Adults</td>
<td>Adults, especially older adults, connect with and establish affirming relationships with youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Identity / Community</td>
<td>Young people are regularly involved in spaces that help them feel connected to one another and their culture or identity.</td>
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**Trusted relationships benefit both the youth and the adult**
Tools for Mental Health Understanding

Mental Health Crisis Card

Name: ________________________________

Pronouns: __________________________________________

I need support in the next 5 minutes.  
Here's what I need from you to help me:

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________ (over)

Depression Looks Different For Everyone

What You See Outside...

Isn't Always What Is Happening Inside

Text Hopkinsline to 741741 — From anywhere, anytime, about any type of challenge or struggle. Help and hope is just a text away.

Grades 3-5
Mental Health Literacy Instructional Units
Managing My Mental Health

Feelings Thermometer

How do you feel?

What can you do about it?

Angry, Furious, Explosive
- Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown
  - Vigorous physical exercise
  - Breathe deep breaths
  - Take a warm shower or bath

Frustrated, Annoyed, Irritable
- Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down
  - Meditation
  - Listen to favorite music
  - Take a fast-paced walk

Anxious, Worried, Unsettled
- Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy
  - Talk to a family member/friend
  - Pay attention to each of your 5 senses
  - Focus on what you can control

Sad, Negative, Lonely
- Crying, Withdrawn, Slowed/Disengaged
  - Set a positive goal for the day
  - Call a friend or relative
  - Journal about your feelings

Happy, Calm, Content
- Smiling, Laughing, Engaged
  - Help someone else
  - Notice and enjoy your positive mood
  - Engage in an enjoyable activity
What We Can Do
Building Connections for Youth

All Students: Sense of Belonging

YRBS, 2010-2019

By group: Sense of Belonging at School

YRBS, 2019

Data source: La Crosse Cou
Contact: diana@bettertogether
Building Connections for Youth

Better Together

What is Better Together?

Better Together is a collaborative community project intended to improve mental health, reduce the number of youth at risk for depression (ages 12–19), promote an overall culture of mental wellness, and normalize mental health conversations.

Better Together is an extraordinary opportunity to improve mental health in La Crosse County, funded through 2024 by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin. La Crosse County—one of 10 communities statewide selected to receive this grant—was chosen due to its proven history of creating positive change through innovation and collaboration.

In partnership with key community organizations, Better Together aims to help youth better understand mental wellness, feel a stronger sense of belonging and a greater sense of purpose, develop positive relationships with trusted adults and learn skills to enhance coping and resiliency.

This unique grant will also enable Better Together and its partners to help adults in La Crosse County build support skills in mental wellness and create stronger communication pathways that encourage mental wellness throughout entire communities.

This project is funded by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

LEARN MORE

Help Better Together promote an overall culture of mental wellness and normalize mental health conversations throughout La Crosse County.

bettertogetherlacrosse.org / 608-371-9789
info@bettertogetherlacrosse.org
Building Connections for Youth
A Wisconsin study identified that these factors protect children from emotional distress, reduce the effects of trauma, and allow growth toward resiliency.
Building Connections for Youth

Reducing Social Isolation
Evidence-based ways to reduce loneliness in adolescence and young adulthood

1. Limit social media use
2. Spend time volunteering
3. Cultivate authentic connections
4. Adopt a pet
5. Exercise
6. Get enough sleep
7. Visit a therapist

Source: Newport Healthcare
Questions

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