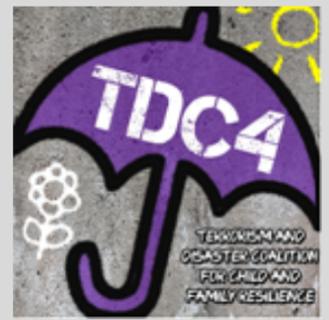


10 CONSIDERATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HELPING IN SCHOOLS FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC



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1 REMEMBER THAT THE ENTIRE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE PANDEMIC.

This includes school administrators, teachers, staff, support personnel, and students.

2 RECOGNIZE THAT EACH SCHOOL HAS ITS OWN CULTURE.

It is important to learn the culture of the school as well as the community.

- Has the school been impacted by previous adversities?
- Has the school been able to institute virtual learning reliably and adequately during COVID?
- If possible, learn more about the school and specific plans for that school when they re-open.

3 DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE ADEQUATE COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS?

Just as school prepare for fire drills – or now, active shooter drills - are they prepared as a structure to have:

- Proper ventilation
- Sanitizing stations throughout the school
- Social distancing as required
- Mask mandates as needed and other safety measures

4 THE WAY YOU START A RELATIONSHIP WITH A SCHOOL SYSTEM WILL SET THE TONE FOR YOUR WORK

First, ask administrators how you can be of help to them:

- Ask for knowledge about students who have fallen behind in the past year
- Ask about those who have had behavioral changes or have experienced loss and grief, and concerns they have about the needs of students and staff
- Remember that schools are the experts for their own school community and students – and that you are a guest in the school.

5 DEFINE YOUR ROLE IN THE SCHOOL BEFORE PROVIDING SERVICES

- Determine if your organization has an agreement and what your role will be with the school district – this will impact how referrals and confidentiality is handled
- If you represent an outside agency, discuss who is going to obtain consents from parents. Will it be school staff? How will referrals to you be handled. Remember you need the school to provide a private place to see students.

6 WORK WITH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY WHAT THEIR NEEDS ARE FOLLOWING COVID-19:

- In collaboration with the school, learn what trainings, consultations, or services may be helpful.
- If possible, have the school conduct a needs assessment including screening of both school personnel and students.
- The screening of students should be done confidentially but not anonymously to identify at-risk students and services that will be most helpful.
- Determine how services may need to be adapted. Discuss with the school offering multiple levels of services to address the diverse needs of the students and staff.

7 BE FLEXIBLE WHEN WORKING IN SCHOOLS

If you are meeting with a child, you may need to adjust your plans based on the schedule at the school. You may also have to adapt to seeing the child in whatever private space is available at the school.

8 TALK TO ADDITIONAL STAFF AT THE SCHOOL FOR IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVES.

Talk to additional staff, such as the office or lunchroom staff, whom you might not ordinarily think about, in order to gain information about how students are handling the trauma of COVID-19, the long separation from school and friends, social distancing, wearing masks, concerns about family, etc.

9 WITH COVID-19, LIKE OTHER MAJOR DISASTERS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT EVERYONE HAS BEEN IMPACTED IN SOME WAY.

With COVID-19, the stress and anxiety has been prolonged with indefinite uncertainty. Be supportive to administrators, teachers, and support staff in addition to children and parents/caregivers.

They will have their own concerns about COVID, may have had economic loss, illness and/or death in their families, and also concerns about their own children while working to support their students.

10 PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ARE ALWAYS IMPORTANT.

If the school wants services for children, even though you will be seeing the children in school, parental consent must be obtained. Further, it is important to include the children's primary caregivers in any service you provide. Recognize that, at times, eliciting parental involvement for behavioral health support may require additional effort.

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