

## ABHI Children's Mental Health Initiative Meeting Summary (draft)

ICS Branch: **School-Based Mental Health**

Meeting Date: **March 30, 2022 9:00 a.m.**

### Participants:

- Brittany Anderson - mental health worker for Grand Portage Reservation
- Lisa Perkovich – supervisor St. Louis County Check and Connect (in 29 schools)
- John Soghigian – Children's Cabinet member, ABHI Board member, Families and Communities Together, project leader for Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative
- Julie Benson – Principal at Two Harbors High School
- AnnMarie Florest – Clinical Director at Range Mental Health, oversee school-based mental health services
- Aubrie Hoover – St. Louis Public Health staff, reassigned to serving schools with covid response
- Melissa Latimore – Director of Operations for CADT; attending today in place of Tina Silverness
- Heidi Seaton – quality assurance Director with North Homes Children and Family Services, filling in for CTSS clinical supervisors who will join future meetings
- Mika Baer – Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Services Program and Policy Coordinator with UCare
- Hannah Alstad – Northeast Regional Outreach Director for Senator Tina Smith
- Mary Gilbertson – Health Care and Aging Outreach Director for Senator Tina Smith
- Karen St. George – Director, St. Louis County Family Services Collaborative
- Carlie Anderson – school nurse in Proctor school district
- Alicia Isom – coordinator of Project Aware grant, St. Louis County
- Alli Pikul – Director of Outpatient Services for Human Development Center in Duluth, services are co-located in many schools in the region

Participants introduced themselves and identified their reason for attending or areas of specific interest related to this working group. Comments included:

- Schools have so much impact on health and wellbeing of children so this is an important avenue to pursue.
- Supporting mental wellbeing doesn't require trained therapists; there is much that can be done to support those who are in touch with kids (teachers and others) to help them support the mental health needs of kids.
- Interested in a collective approach to problem solve how we improve access to services; agencies are all struggling due to staffing, so working collaboratively will help us all utilize resources and existing staff in the best way we can
- Needs far exceed support systems currently available; looking for creative ways to address needs

- See opportunities to collaborate with Project Aware, a 5-year grant funded initiative supporting upstreaming as well as kids in crisis
- Needs have increased tremendously; schools have limited resources and looking for creative ways to meet needs of students and what we can bring into the schools to help kids and staff
- Interested in reinventing and rejuvenating what we do related to school-based mental health services
- Personal connections to children struggling in school, so feel the urgency to address this
- Critical need for mental health services was apparent prior to the pandemic but these needs have been compounded by the pandemic. Also seeing significant compassion fatigue among teachers and staff at schools
- For liaison list, the Arrowhead Regional Public and Health Coalition is developing a mental health workshop, trauma informed, compassion fatigue, acute stress and burnout, for educators, school nurses and daycare providers
- North Homes contracts with 15 difference school districts; looking forward how we can increase services to both children and staff across the region
- Interest in learning how manage care organizations can partner with providers or provide some education pieces around school linked mental health services, or see if there are advocacy efforts with DHS/MDH or Dept. of Education
- CADT now has a provider in IDS709 – substance use disorder counselor providing one on one assessment and counseling, interested to learn how this might fit into what’s being discussed today
- Want to understand how to help staff and students be the best they can be; you can’t have health without having good mental health. We are seeing a lot of mental health struggles post pandemic in both students and staff
- Senator Smith has introduced a bill (Mental Health Services for Students Act) on the federal level to increase the amount of Project Aware funding nationally

Brief overview of ABHI Children’s Mental Health Initiative.

- This is one of 8 work groups/ICS branches being convened. While each group will determine is own focus and work plan, there will likely be cross over between groups. We are not seeking to create additional silos but to promote communication between groups and integrate efforts
- Intent is to support core values of accountability, communication coordination, innovation and action in responding to mental health crisis.
- Initial meetings for each branch will be facilitated to help create action plan and reach consensus on initial goals, objectives and activities. Groups will transition to leadership from within (co-leaders preferred)

### **Action Plan Discussion**

While Zoom format allows greater participation across distance, it can be clunky for developing collaborative work plans. A survey monkey survey will be distributed to work group members, with

responses synthesized and shared for group discussion to help build the work plan and create a common understanding around goals, scope, actions, etc. Discussion today was intended as initial brainstorming about elements to consider in identifying the scope and intent of this group. Key thoughts shared included:

- We need to increase the awareness of the difference between mental health and mental illness. Many school-based staff (not practitioners) believe that they don't have the tools and resources to impact mental health but they do; they just don't have the resources and tools to address mental health. We need to draw a distinction between what that might look like at a school.
- Educators have received education and training on adolescent brain development, survival brain vs. learning brain, etc. but in many cases it's been years since they received this information. We need reminders about simple things that can impact mental health on campus; we know these things (example of 2 recesses provided as an example) but often we are hesitant to impact them.
- How can we help administration and counselors to assess our students and staff to understand how our time and resources should be directed to address issues?
- Excited about enhancing partnerships across all of our systems and focus our efforts together. Sometimes we don't use resources we have because we aren't working together to find solutions.
- Trauma informed education is vitally important
- Interest in exploring how we can expand trauma informed education, bring mental health services to the schools, using telehealth in schools, build Project Aware on a grander level.
- Project Aware is important but we also need to address workforce issues of no applicants for positions; can we build cohorts that are trained up here vs. online?
- Want to work towards funding to offset student loans for mental health practitioners (legislative group) as ongoing provider shortages is an issue. There have to be ways to enhance current efforts to rebuild the mental health workforce
- Some things need to start at the legislative level. Many schools don't have social workers, and the need is high. Our counselors and nurses are bombarded with needs that social workers could address. Does this need to be a core part of education funding? Existing staff are doing the best that they can but there are issues like homelessness, hunger, clothing, issues in the home and other issues that impact students. Can we figure out how to find long term funding (not just band aid funding) to build that into district budgets for long term funding.
- Project Aware is looking at different tiered system; we don't have enough providers/services to build a robust Tier 3 system, so we are focusing on Tier 1, which is taking care of student and teacher social and emotional wellbeing. A lot of teachers working with students have the tools and skills to support students. A regulated adults can co-regulate a student, so how do we support our teachers in staff to be proactive and regulated? Build basic understanding and knowledge of hyper/hypo arousal and psychoeducation pieces for teachers. Do teachers have

knowledge of their own nervous system? Do they know how to regulate? What is co-regulation?

- Grants are available for social worker retention, but only after they have achieved LICSW licensure, but there are a lot of things that can happen at the LGSW (Master's level with supervision) level. Can we retain funding for the LGSW level, then we can retain interns and others? Is there Title funding available to help retain school social workers?
- HDC's Children and Families teams work with kids and are co-located in many schools, working with schools or within schools to meet kids' mental health needs. In school support provides much better access to kids, even though it's not without barriers and challenges.
- Some of the more successful efforts in schools in Mpls have used mental health professionals as a resource to be available for teachers who have difficulties with a particular child. With our limited mental health resource, are there ways to get those in the mental health community to take calls from teachers? Phone is not great, video is slightly better, but at least to have professional knowledge to consult with teachers and offer ideas and strategies. There are a lot of frustrations by teachers who feel like they don't have the resources to deal with mental health problems. HDC noted that they have tried to offer this over the past semester, offering to set aside time at each school location to talk with teachers about anything. Some schools have indicated they don't want to offer this (admin barriers), other schools have not had a lot of responses from teachers themselves. Struggling to get engagement with teachers. Perhaps we can check with those in Mpls to see how they have overcome these barriers and improve acceptance in the educational community. While face to face encounters at staff meetings might be an option, that's also challenging as there is limited time on staff meetings and bringing in outside resources doesn't always happen (i.e. send an email rather than bring in outside people). Can administrators help to carve out time so that teachers can share issues and outside professionals can help?

### **Next steps**

Survey Monkey will be shared with all group participants. Responses will be summarized and shared with the group for discussion at the next meeting.

### **Future meetings**

The next meeting will be held via zoom on **Wednesday, April 20 at 9:00**. Future meetings will ideally be held bi-weekly through early June, to support development of a work plan prior to the summer when it's more difficult to bring people together.

### **Communication**

A written summary will be provided for all meetings. Meetings will be recorded to facilitate accurate discussion summaries and to capture participant feedback, but links will not be made public. They will be available for viewing upon request for 30 days following a meeting by a group participant unable to attend a meeting.

Participants consented to sharing of email addresses to support communication between group members. Email addresses of those present at today's meeting are included below.

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