



# NEWSLETTER

April 2023

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Welcome to the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) April Newsletter!

## Supporting Child Well-being through Reducing Toxic Stress – Newest OCMH Fact Sheet

When a child repeatedly experiences threatening or harmful situations, their body remains on high alert, flooded with adrenaline or the stress hormone, cortisol. This is toxic stress, which can damage developing brains and bodies and can cause numerous physical and behavioral problems.

Resulting brain changes are linked with anxiety, depression, and learning problems and impact teens' emotional regulation, decision-making, and impulse control. Emotionally, children who live with toxic stress can demonstrate oppositional behaviors and struggle with self-regulation, which leads to trouble maintaining healthy relationships.



Brain plasticity – the ability of the brain to continually adapt in response to the environment – means that kids can recover from stress. If toxic stress stops and is replaced by practices that build resilience in a caring environment, the brain can slowly undo many of the stress-induced changes.

### What We Can Do

#### Parents/Caregivers

- Strengthen skills and relationships that help families cope with stress.
- Ensure children have at least one trusted adult in their lives.

#### Policymakers

- Invest in high-quality early care and education for children living in high-poverty communities.
- Expand refundable tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, to ease financial burden on working parents.

#### Schools

- Cultivate a trauma-informed school with trauma-sensitive strategies, whole school wellness practices, and social emotional skill-building in all grades.
- Provide extra support to children known to have been exposed to traumatic events or to be experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

#### Providers

- Provide trauma-informed care and consider screening patients for ACEs.

Access the full Fact Sheet, recommendations, and research citations [here](#).

## Lived Experience Insights

*Andrea Turtenwald, Family Relations Coordinator – Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health, shares her insights on toxic stress.*

If you've been in a meeting with me, you may have heard me introduce myself as a person with lived experience. Toxic stress is part of my lived experience because it was very prevalent in my childhood.

I have five ACEs, primarily household dysfunction involving substance abuse, incarceration, and parental separation. Many years later, as an adult and a parent, the toxic stress of my past still impacts my day-to-day life.

Though memory of my childhood is fuzzy in many regards, I recall my feelings in elementary school of hopelessness, confusion, and shame about my home life. Even as I dive into these memories to write this piece, I can still feel the deep longing I had as a child for things to get better and to have the predictable life of my suburban classmates.

In my teen years, there was much more stability living with my paternal grandparents, but the challenges of parental separation and their untreated mental health needs persisted. To cope with that ongoing dysfunction and the addition of new stress that comes with adolescence, I started self-harming and regularly thinking about suicide.

In the moment, feeling those feelings and spending weeks of my young adulthood just wishing I would disappear, it felt like I was the source of the chaos and there was something inherently wrong with me. As an adult, it's clear to see how my childhood and teen experience are frankly, unoriginal – my response to ongoing, persistent familial stress is to be expected. Unfortunately for me, connecting those dots intellectually doesn't fix it all.

To this day, I regularly experience internal chaos stemming from my childhood toxic stress:

- Anxiety feels like a core personality trait instead of a persistent emotion I try to manage. I believe anxiety is my way of preparing for the perceived challenges of my daily life, staying hypervigilant for all possible outcomes.
- Ruminating on feelings of sadness and hopelessness is exhausting, but it honestly feels *comfortable* and *predictable* to dive into those thoughts, probably because that's where I've mentally retreated for years when facing hardship.
- My internal dialogue is full of insults and pessimism – this way of thinking feels like a habit that dictates how I view myself and my worth.

I've spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in therapy and receiving treatment for my prevailing mental health needs of self-harm, suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety. And I'm not done.

This life journey isn't a preferred path, but I find some peace and assurance knowing I'm not alone in these experiences, and that there are professionals, peers, and loved ones working to improve my



situation and supporting families in Wisconsin so children don't experience the toxic stress and compounded long-term impact that I have.

And, above all, I've felt immense gratitude and catharsis in raising my two little humans in a stable household with the support of my parents. As far as I'm concerned, the toxic stress will end with me.

## OCMH Updates

### Children's Mental Health Week – May 7-13, 2023 Moving from Awareness to Acceptance to Action

Join our "Get Ready for Children's Mental Health Week" Webinar  
to Prepare

April 20, 2023 • 12-1 pm

Register for the webinar [here](#).

**2023 is the Year of Mental Health**, as declared by Governor Evers. The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health is calling on advocates and partner organizations to leverage this unprecedented interest in mental health by intentionally providing information with your community during Children's Mental Health Week: May 7 - May 13.

Join this webinar to access tools which build awareness, promote acceptance, and inspire action on children's mental health. With these resources, we hope you will contribute to Children's Mental Health Week 2023!

This session will be recorded and all resources will be shared with those who register.

### Welcome Kimberly Scott-Dorsey

OCMH welcomes Kimberly Scott-Dorsey. As an intern, Kimberly will focus on OCMH's Social Connectedness of Youth agenda, reaching out to organizations working with youth and to organizations engaged in efforts to bring youth and elders together to address social isolation and the lack of connectedness. She will be with OCMH through summer 2023.

Kimberly is working on her Master of Arts in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Adler University. This program trains students in the scientific study of how human beings shape the business world, and how businesses shape human beings, the groups to which they belong, and the communities in which they live. Kimberly comes to OCMH with extensive experience participating in a range of Milwaukee-based community organizations. For many years, she also was the owner and director of a childcare program.

Please join us in welcoming Kimberly!

The graphic is a teal and white promotional card for a webinar. At the top, it says "Get Ready for Children's Mental Health Week". Below that, it invites users to join a webinar to prepare for Children's Mental Health Week in their community. It specifies the date as Thursday, April 20, from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm, and provides an RSVP link at children.wi.gov. A small icon indicates it's for 2023, "The Year of Mental Health". At the bottom, a blue arrow points from left to right, divided into three sections: "Awareness", "Acceptance", and "Action". The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health logo is in the bottom left corner.



## Mental Health Crisis Card Videos Now Available

The OCMH [Mental Health Crisis Card](#) helps people in the first five minutes of a mental health crisis or when they are unable to verbalize what can help them in those moments to calm down and de-escalate, so the crisis can be avoided. The small, business-sized card includes space for youth, and adults, to list three calming strategies that those around them can do to help the person who is struggling.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ (over)

Three videos are now available that explain how to use the Card and why it is important:

- How to use the Mental Health Crisis Card. [Watch the video](#).
- Young Adult Nick Krisko explains why it is important to honor youth voice when they are in an agitated state or escalating to a mental health crisis and need help. [Watch the video](#).
- Parent Rob Kaminski explains the importance of parents in helping their child use the Card. [Watch the video](#).
- Sgt. Joshua T. Hopkins, Behavioral Health Investigator – Outagamie County Sheriff's Office explains how the Card can assist law enforcement. [Watch the video](#).

## Legislative & Policy Update

**State Biennial Budget 2023-25.** Governor Evers has declared 2023 The Year of Mental Health and has included \$500 million to expand access to mental and behavioral health for children and adults in his 2023-25 state budget. Among the proposed provisions, OCMH several as especially important to create access to, and sustain provision of, a full array of quality mental health treatment services that Wisconsin's children need. Increasing youth voice and structures to support their decision-making would also increase the effectiveness of multiple state efforts to gather youth input on children's well-being. [OCMH Children's Mental Health Budget Priorities](#).

Now is the time to raise children's mental health priorities with legislators, especially the Joint Finance Committee members. Budget comments, which will be circulated to all 16 committee members, may be submitted at: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/>. For more on how to raise your voice for children's mental health in the state budget see our [OCMH budget page](#) and check back for more as we add to it over the month.

**State Legislation.** [AB 53/SB 82](#). All high schools, beginning in the 2024-25 school year, would be required to collect statistics on violations of municipal disorderly conduct ordinances and certain crimes and report them to the Department of Public Instruction the incidences occurred on a weekday between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. and a charge is filed or citation is issued. This bill which was reported on in more detail in last month's newsletter was passed by the Assembly 61-35 on March 14. The Senate version is still in the Senate Education Committee. [More](#)

[AB 69](#). All public schools would be required to report any incident that occurs in a school building or on school grounds to local law enforcement. The bill provides that, if 100 or more incidents occur in and on public school buildings and grounds during a school semester, and at least 25 of those incidents result in an arrest, the school must, no later than the first day of the next school year, employ or contract for the employment of a law enforcement officer as an armed school resource officer (SRO) to work at the school. More on this bill was included in our March newsletter. On March 14, AB 69 passed the Assembly 59 to 36. [More](#)

[AB 3/SB 4](#). These companion bills prohibit the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board from creating any rule that establishes as unprofessional conduct the promotion or use of any method that has the purpose of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. On March 15, AB 3 was referred to the Assembly Committee on Family Law. The last action on SB 4 was a March 22<sup>nd</sup> referral to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. [AB 3/SB 4](#)

[AB 32/SB 31](#) Under this bill, an individual could receive an income tax deduction for certain income earned from the practice of psychiatry or from providing psychiatric or mental health services. The Assembly Committee on Ways and Means held a hearing on the Assembly version of the bill. [AB 32/SB 31](#)

**President Biden's School Mental Health Budget Provision.** The President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 includes \$244 million, an increase of \$104 million, for Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE), which identifies children and youth in need of mental health services in their schools. In FY 2024, SAMHSA projects these funds will help to identify and refer approximately 120,000 school-aged youth to mental health and related services. Our March newsletter described additional children's mental health provisions in the President's Budget. [More](#)

## Children's Mental Health in the News



*OCMH Senior Research Analyst Amy Marsman spotlights recent articles, resources and research findings impacting youth mental health.*

### **Mental Health Care for Young People with Diabetes**

Diabetes has been linked to mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and ADHD. With diabetes and mental disorders on the rise, a recent CDC study investigated the connection and found that young people with diabetes were twice as likely to have mental, behavioral, or developmental disorders compared to youth without diabetes. Including mental and behavioral health support in diabetes care – such as making mental health screenings part of routine diabetes care – will be an important step in treating the whole child. Read [journal article](#) and [accompanying resources](#).

### **25% of Black Transgender and Nonbinary Youth Reported a Suicide Attempt**

Suicide rates among Black youth increased 37% between 2018 and 2021. The intersection of being both Black and transgender or nonbinary may make young people more susceptible to negative experiences and chronic stress stemming from their multiple marginalized social statuses. Using data from The Trevor Project, this brief seeks to understand Black youth mental health and protective factors among Black trans and nonbinary young people. For these youth, the study found those who had high social support from their family were much less likely to report a suicide attempt (47% lower odds). Read the [research brief](#).

### **Addressing Discrimination Helps Youth Suicide Prevention**

Researchers found that to effectively reduce suicide among youth with the highest risk (LGBTQ, trans, BIPOC, youth with disabilities), states must understand the relationship between discrimination and suicide risk. States must also support efforts to reduce exposure to discrimination among youth. The brief summarizes youth suicide risk patterns, reviews whether state suicide

prevention plans address discrimination as a risk factor, and highlights school connectedness as a key protective factor that reduces suicide risk. Read the [brief](#).

### **Connecting Relationships, Mental Health, and ACP**

A new report from the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) leverages findings on the positive connection between mental health of Wisconsin students, having supportive adults, and academic and career planning (ACP). Research found that focused efforts on the mental health of students positively impacts outcomes for academic, social, emotional, and career development. Read the [brief](#) and [resources](#) from WEC.

### **Comprehensive Meta-analysis Confirms the Broad Positive Impacts of SEL**

A systematic review of research on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions from 2008 through 2020, including studies from 53 countries, representing nearly 600,000 children reveals students who had SEL instruction experienced significantly improved skills, attitudes, behaviors, school climate and safety, peer relationships, school functioning, and academic achievement. Researchers also found that when SEL programs teach intrapersonal skills before interpersonal skills, there are better outcomes. Read the [journal article](#) and [related story](#).

### **The Growing Cost of the Child Care Crisis**

A new report released by Council for a Strong America now estimates the economic impact of the United States' infant-toddler child care crisis at \$122 billion and \$1.9 billion in Wisconsin. The impact on families, businesses, and taxpayers has more than doubled since 2018 according to the report. Read the [report](#) and related [article](#) summarizing Wisconsin experts statements on the importance of investing in the child care landscape – that without renewed state funding, our state's child care challenges will become a full-blown crises.

### **Strategies in Promoting Trauma-Informed Child Care and Early Education Systems**

With support from caring adults in their lives, young children can heal from traumatic events without requiring intensive interventions. Young children affected by trauma may have challenges regulating their behavior and emotions and may rely heavily on families and other adults, including their child care and early education (CCEE) providers, for co-regulation of emotions and a sense of safety. This highlight provides an overview of research on early childhood trauma and its relevance to CCEE. The highlight also offers evidence-informed strategies and best practices for CCEE leaders to consider when implementing trauma-informed approaches to support young children, parents/caregivers, and CCEE providers. Read the [research highlight](#).

### **Pre-K Data Equity Framework**

Pre-K Data Equity Framework, an effort to collect consistent, national data to comprehensively address inequities within the PreK system, a project of the Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC) at Child Trends, is developing a framework to guide data collection and early care equity efforts. Comprehensive data are a critical investment for states looking to provide more equitable early childhood education(ECE). Read the [story](#), related [article](#), and more about [early childhood data](#).

## **Of Interest**

### **April is Family Strengthening Month**

Join the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board in strengthening all Wisconsin families and promoting Five for Families. Shining a light on the issue of family strengthening, we all can build healthy children and strong families. April is the month to come together to show our shared commitment to

children and families. The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board offers a [toolkit](#). For more [information](#).

### April is National Minority Health Month

April is the time to raise awareness about health disparities. The 2023 theme is “[Better Health Through Better Understanding](#)” and focuses on improving health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities. Governor Evers declared April as National Minority Health Month throughout the State of Wisconsin. See the [proclamation](#).

### Funding Opportunity – Lt. Governors’ STEM Scholarship Program

The National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) has opened the application period for the annual Lt. Governors’ STEM Scholarship Program, which awards up to \$1,000 to 12 schools nationally to support STEM-related activities for youth. All public, private, and Tribal schools in the 50 states and five U.S. territories are invited to apply. [Learn more](#). [Apply](#).

### Developmental Milestones Resource

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) relaunched the *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* program’s *Milestones in Action*, providing parents and caregivers information on the developmental milestones children should reach from age 2 months to 5 years. [Learn more](#).

### Connection and Well-being Survey

Mental Health America is collecting survey responses to better understand how individuals connect with themselves, others, and nature. Take the [survey](#).

### Interviews Exploring Youth Mental Health in School and Community

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension is conducting interviews to better understand, evaluate, and improve youth mental health supports in school and community. School personnel, mental health professionals, caregivers and parents, and youth ages 10-18 are invited to participate. If interested email: [andy@education.wisc.edu](mailto:andy@education.wisc.edu)

## Positive Alternatives

Calm down	→	How can I help you?
That's enough	→	Do you need a hug?
I'm over this	→	I'm here for you
Don't get upset	→	It's okay to feel sad
Stop yelling	→	Take a breath, then tell me what happened
Don't hit	→	Please be gentle
Be quiet	→	Use a softer voice
You're okay	→	Are you okay?
Stop crying	→	I can see this is hard for you

### FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

of Central Oregon  
541-389-5468 [www.frconline.org](http://www.frconline.org)

The Office of Children’s Mental Health  
[Children.wi.gov](http://Children.wi.gov)  
[OCMH@wisconsin.gov](mailto:OCMH@wisconsin.gov)

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