



# NEWSLETTER

*February 2022 Edition*

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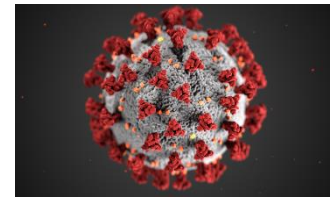
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**Welcome to the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) February Newsletter!**

## **Children and COVID-19 Grief – OCMH Fact Sheet**

### **Children and COVID-19 Grief – OCMH Fact Sheet**

Children and youth have experienced many types of loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. From death of loved ones to loss of rituals and routines, the past two years have been tough on young people.



As of June 2021 an estimated 1,098 young people in Wisconsin had lost a parent or caretaking grandparent to COVID-19. And, many more have seen their parent, grandparent, or other loved one become seriously ill or become debilitated by acute or "long COVID."

Research from other pandemics and disasters show that even children who do not experience a close death may become overwhelmed if the situation leads them to have unaddressed feelings of powerlessness, social stigma, and disconnection. That is why it is important for adults to recognize the signs of distress in young people. They may also look like inattentiveness or acting out rather than sadness. Physical symptoms such as stomachaches or refusal to go to places or engage in activities that trigger the grief may also be signs.

### **What we can do**

- **Parents/Caregivers:**
  - Talk about the loss. Listen to your child and let them talk about their feelings. Validate their experiences. Help them feel calm.
  - Use routines to help establish a sense of normalcy.
  - Seek professional help if needed.
- **Schools:**
  - Educate staff about child and adolescent grief.
  - Provide supports to bereaved students.
- **Policymakers:**
  - Expand mental health resources through support for telehealth, student services professionals in schools, and school-based social emotional learning and mental health programming.
- **Communities:**
  - Create opportunities for youth to interact with other supportive adults in the community who can get to know them and provide a listening ear or opportunities for fun.

Read the complete [Fact Sheet](#) and review the references.

## Lived Experience Insights

*OCMH Lived Experience Partner Crystal Long shares her insights on the children's mental health journey towards understanding, support, and seeking services.*

### Seeking resources for long-term services – Where do I go when I don't know where to go?

You know you need something for your child's mental health challenges but you just don't know where to even begin. Maybe this is uncharted territory for you. You are not alone. Here is one parent's perspective – the journey of one to help others.

**LIVED EXPERIENCE PARTNERS**  
BUILD CONNECTIONS AND CAPACITY  
TO CREATE SYSTEMS CHANGE



Having children with mental health challenges is complex, confusing, and frequently leaves us on a path where we just don't know where to go. Atypical and typical children are entirely different and require different methods and solutions, even if it seems on the surface they are the same.

Too often as the challenges persist, we, as parents, find ourselves figuring out the path alone, even when we are told there are many of us out there that feel the same. We often feel scared, lost, angry, abandoned, or confused. That is OK. These feelings, and others you may experience, are normal and need to be processed.

Finding support and services for our children can be stressful, especially if we don't have a support system in place or a direction to go. Support can come in many different forms and, oftentimes, from unexpected places. Here are a few organizations that offer resources, support, connections, and services for your child's mental health:

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) – providing resources, information, support groups, advocacy, and more.
- [Parent 2 Parent of Wisconsin](#) – helping parents find a one-to-one connection with another parent who understands what you are going through.
- [Wisconsin Family Ties](#) – an advocacy group that helps empower parents.
- [Office of Children's Mental Health](#) – supporting Wisconsin's children in achieving their optimal mental health and well-being.
- [Well Badger](#) – a health information and referral program.
- **211** – In areas that offer 211, it can help locate local services, including mental health. You can access it by phone (dial 211) or website (search "211" for local 211 services).

The search will look different for everybody because, while we are on the same path, we are at different stages. Be OK with finding what works best for you and your family.

- *By: Crystal Long, Office of Children's Mental Health Lived Experience Parent Partner*

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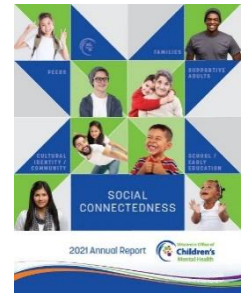
## OCMH Updates

### OCMH 2021 Annual Report

OCMH announced its 2021 Annual Report on January 11, 2022. Nearly 200 people joined the virtual briefing to learn the key children's mental health and well-being indicators OCMH is following and areas for improvement.

[Read](#) the 2021 Annual Report.

[View](#) the briefing presentation.



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### New Trauma-Informed Care Training Coming Soon!

“Exploring Race and Culture from a Trauma-Informed Lens” is the topic of OCMH’s next trauma-informed care video training series. It will include three parts:

1. Segment 1: White Privilege (has two parts – Part 1 is Exploring White Privilege and Part 2 is Growing into Authentic Allyship and Racial Justice)
2. Segment 2: Implicit Bias
3. Segment 3: Working with People with Different Racial and Cultural Backgrounds

**Segment 1 – White Privilege will be released February 22, 2022** on the OCMH website. Each part is a 30-minute video featuring an expert panel discussing the topic. Panelists for both Segment 1 videos are:

- Armando Hernandez – Chief Diversity Officer, Journey Mental Health Center
- William Parke Sutherland – Health Policy Analyst, Kids Forward
- Pat Parker – Curriculum and Instruction Manager, the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare at UW – Milwaukee
- Panel moderator is Linda Hall, Director – Office of Children’s Mental Health

Each video will include a digital toolkit including discussion questions and resources.

The trainings are geared towards the general workforce. Employee teams are encouraged to view the videos in a group and then discuss the accompanying discussion questions as a team. The video and discussion can fit into a one-hour training session.

A special email announcement will be sent by OCMH when the new “Exploring Race and Culture from a Trauma-Informed Lens – White Privilege” training is posted to its website.

Prior OCMH trauma-informed care workshops and video trainings have been very popular with the workforce. There is no cost for the on-demand training. View OCMH’s “Collective Trauma of COVID-19” video training [here](#).

### OCMH Draws Attention to the Impacts of Underage Drinking in Wisconsin

In a January 14, 2022 media advisory OCMH Director Linda Hall called for people to work together to prevent underage drinking. Although Wisconsin youth under age 21 have been drinking less over the years, they are still drinking more than youth in other states. Underage drinking leads to increased likelihood of risky sexual behaviors, acts of violence, and trouble in school and with the law. It can also lead to increased likelihood of making current or emerging symptoms of depression and anxiety even worse.



Recently released mortality data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show a 25% increase of deaths of Wisconsinites directly linked to excessive alcohol use. Although the CDC data are not limited to children, it is important to remember that children are affected by these deaths and that youth in Wisconsin are more likely to drink excessively than youth in other states, and the consequences of that can be serious. (Data reported in the [Wisconsin Policy Forum Report](#).)

The numbers support concern:

- Youth in Wisconsin normalize drinking more than youth in all 49 other states. In fact, a 2018 study showed only 36% of kids age 12-17 thought it was risky to have 5 or more drinks once or twice a week.
- 90% of youth alcohol intake is done in the form of binge drinking.

What we can do:

- Broad-based community involvement is necessary to prevent underage drinking. Prevention strategies include making alcohol less available, attractive, affordable, and acceptable.
- Parents can make a difference by having small, casual conversations with children starting at about age 8 in order to help them make healthier decisions about alcohol.

Read the OCMH [Fact Sheet](#) on Preventing Underage Drinking.

Get tips on how to start a [Small Talks](#) conversation about alcohol with your kids.

## Legislative & Policy Update

**Transferring Schools related to Mask Mandates.** SB 587 / AB 600. These bills require the Department of Public Instruction to make state aid payments for pupils in grades kindergarten to grade 12, who transfer schools due to the existence or absence of mandates regarding pupil face coverings or COVID-19 vaccines. The Senate bill that applies to the 2021-22 school year passed the Education Committee on October 21, 2021. The Assembly bill that applies to the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years passed the Assembly Mental Health Committee on February 1 and was then referred to the Assembly Rules Committee. No future hearings or executive actions are scheduled at this time.

**Concealed Carry of Weapon License.** SB 502 / AB 498. These companion bills lower from 21 to 18 the minimum age at which an individual can hold a concealed carry license. The Assembly on January 20 passed their version and messaged it to the Senate which referred it to their Committee on Insurance, Licensing and Forestry. On the same day the Assembly passed four more gun-related bills on a voice vote. One of the four bills would allow a person who is licensed to carry a concealed weapon to possess a firearm, in a vehicle, on school grounds.

**Federal Legislation to Address Gaps in Mental Health Care.** OCMH submitted suggestions to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee when they requested ideas for bipartisan legislation on how to address gaps in mental health care access. This week the Committee shared the information below on the issues they will be exploring further and which Senators will lead on each:

- **Strengthening the workforce:** Sen. Stabenow, Sen. Daines
  - Health advisors: Alex Graf (Sen. Stabenow), Rachel Green (Sen. Daines)
- **Increasing integration, coordination and access to care:** Sen. Cortez-Masto, Sen. Cornyn
  - Health advisors: Casey Badmington (Sen. Cortez-Masto), Jeff Last (Sen. Cornyn)
- **Ensuring parity between behavioral and physical health care:** Sen. Bennet, Sen. Burr
  - Health advisors: Santiago Gonzalez (Sen. Bennet), Corey Ensslin (Sen. Burr)
- **Furthering the use of telehealth:** Sen. Cardin, Sen. Thune
  - Health advisors: Martha Cramer (Sen. Cardin), Danielle Janowski (Sen. Thune)
- **Improving access to behavioral health care for children and young people:** Sen. Carper, Sen. Cassidy
  - Health advisors: Anthony Theissen (Sen. Carper), Mary Moody (Sen. Cassidy)

## Children's Mental Health News

**Five Ways to Help Your Child Remember and Celebrate Loved Ones** – healthychildren.org. Taking steps to preserve memories of loved ones is key to healing after loss. Read the [article](#).

**Extra cash for low-income mothers may influence baby brains** – Madison.com. New research suggests giving extra cash to low-income mothers can change their infants' brain development. Read the [article](#).

**We Need Time to Rehabilitate from the Trauma of the Pandemic** – Harvard Business Review. Read the [article](#).

**A shining example of youth connection – The Goodman Center hosted the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health.** First Lady Kathy Evers, State Superintendent Jill Underly, DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson, and DHS Secretary Designee Karen Timberlake joined OCMH in learning how The Goodman Community Center supports Social Connectedness of Youth. [Read the article](#).

## Of Interest

### February is Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by Black individuals and communities and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history.

Learn about [Carter G. Woodson](#), the man behind Black History Month. Learn more about [Black History Month](#).



### February is National Parent Leadership Month

National Parent Leadership Month was initiated by Parents Anonymous® as an opportunity to show appreciation for parents who work to improve the lives of their families, neighbors, and communities. [Learn more](#).

**Youth Justice Wisconsin** is an initiative focused on bringing people together in collaboration to comprehensively transform the youth justice system, increase community safety, and improve well-being for young people ages 12-24. [Learn more.](#)

#### Grants available from the Division of Care and Treatment Services (DCTS)

- **Collaborative Crisis Intervention Services to Youth Grant Opportunity** – Counties are invited to collaborate with other counties and federally recognized tribes for the development and implementation of programs designed to provide crisis intervention services to youth. Applications must encompass approaches that result in improved access, services, and outcomes for youth under the age of 21 who have an apparent severe emotional disturbance. Applications are due by April 21, 2022, 2 pm. [Learn more.](#)
- **Wisconsin Zero Suicide Training** – Mental Health America of Wisconsin, with support through a grant from the DCTS, is accepting applications for the 2022 Wisconsin Zero Suicide Training and learning community. This is a training for organizations that wish to implement the Zero Suicide quality improvement framework and is not suicide care training for individuals. This year's Wisconsin Zero Suicide Training is scheduled to take place live online using Zoom June 22-24, 2022. Applications are due by April 29, 2022. [Learn more.](#)
- **Statewide Peer-Run Warmline** – Peer-run organizations are invited to apply for funding to develop and operate a statewide warmline that will employ certified peer specialists to provide peer support over the phone to people experiencing increased stress or symptoms related to mental health and substance use concerns. The service created under this grant funding opportunity must be open to all state residents 24/7 and capable of handling a high volume of calls. Applications are March 8, 2022, 2 pm. [Learn more.](#)



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