



# NEWSLETTER

November 2021 Edition

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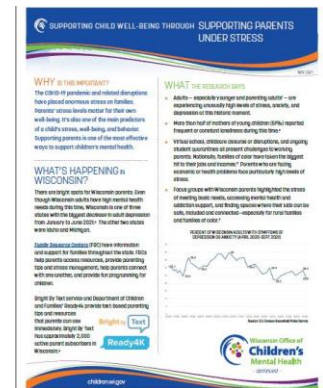
Welcome to the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) November Newsletter!

## Supporting Parents Under Stress – OCMH November Fact Sheet

The stress levels parents are enduring as a result of the pandemic and related disruptions have placed enormous stress on families. Not only does this stress impact parent's well-being but it is one of the main predictors of a child's stress, well-being, and behavior. Supporting parents is one of the most effective ways to support children's mental health.

During the pandemic:

- More than half of mothers of young children (51%) reported frequent or constant loneliness during this time.
- Virtual school, childcare closures or disruptions, and ongoing student quarantines all present challenges to working parents. Nationally, families of color have taken the biggest hit to their jobs and incomes. Parents who are facing economic or health problems face particularly high levels of stress.
- Focus groups with Wisconsin parents highlighted the stress of meeting basic needs, accessing mental health and addiction support, and finding spaces where their kids can be safe, included and connected—especially for rural families and families of color.



## What we can do:

### Parents

- Realize that you are not alone.
- Ask for help if you need it. Dial 211 or the Family Resource Center for help meeting your family's basic needs like housing, food, and health care.
- Get help with your kids' mental health or behavior problems by asking your pediatrician or a school counselor.
- Take care of yourself – exercise (even a few minutes), listen to music, or consult the OCMH [Feelings Thermometer](#) for more ideas.

### Communities

- Embrace parenting networks like the [Parenting Network Parent Hotline](#).
- Support intergenerational spaces and initiatives, where older adults can connect with kids or advise and support younger parents.

### Employers

- Provide employees with flexibility to meet their caretaking obligations.

- Disseminate information about resources for parents.

#### Policy makers

- Support family leave policies.
- Ensure adequate funding and support for childcare, especially in parts of the state with the greatest need.

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

## Lived Experience Insights

*OCMH Lived Experience Partner Tracy Loken Weber shares her insights on parents under stress.*

In a blink of an eye – with the COVID-19 pandemic the world shut down. Wraparound services for our children ended. No more outpatient therapy, physical therapy, home therapy, in-clinic therapy, farewell to art therapy, no more music therapy, the minimal support at school – all went away. 30+ hours of support was gone. It was just our family, at home, making virtually anything happen. The sense of being home, no outside influences and nowhere to go – really brought a new consciousness of calm to our home. Our family of eight with six special needs children were all home 24/7.

Who, me? Stressed out? Maybe so – but, at the end of the day – the healing journey continued with or without a global pandemic. When my husband and I chose to become foster parents and later adopt, we thought we knew what we were getting ourselves into when we became a forever home to two different sibling groups that were once separated in foster care, reunited, and later adopted by my husband and me.

Our children struggle being out in the community, so when COVID caused the entire world to be shut down, our being at home was already our normal. But, what did change was the daily support systems we had in place to support our children and their healing journey. Thankfully, telehealth therapy and psychiatry appointments became available and this alone has forever changed our children and home life for the better. Now, simply done from the comfort of our home, where everything is safe and familiar.

While some children struggled with virtual instruction, our children thrived. The stress of going to and being in school caused significant anxiety and depression issues for our children. Once home and learning virtually, we saw significant academic gains in our children, and within four short months our daughter (whom I was told would never be able to read) went from reading at a pre-kindergarten level to a third-grade level! Simply because she felt safe, surrounded by loving adults who had a stable, trusting relationship with her. In a sense, we were in perfect attunement with all of our children, meeting their emotional needs every single day.

The parental stress of having the means to be able to provide for youth in their care, can become very overwhelming, taxing, and emotionally exhausting. Systems that are supposed to be supporting parents are in all actuality oppressing already struggling parents with endless amounts of paperwork – often duplicating paperwork, responding to additional paperwork to meet agency external deadlines all while keeping all the other day-to-day household tasks in operation including daily/weekly medication

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



management, doctor, and therapy appointments, communication from schools and therapists, laundry, shopping, and meal prep.

The daily struggles of working with children with mental health is complicated, messy, and challenging. Yet, their healing journey continues. Systems of change who are here to support caregivers and families, need to do a better job aligning resources and simplifying the processes to put resources in place. By doing so, we will have truly created a community of support to help caregivers and parents who endure daily stress.

Read the complete [blog](#).

*Tracy Loken Weber, M.Ed. is a Lived Experience Partner and co-chair of the Office of Children's Mental Health Collective Impact Council, Parents United Board Member, mental health advocate, educator and life coach, best-selling author and finalizing her doctorate all while navigating parenthood to five resilient, adopted children and serving as a foster parent. Connect with Tracy at [TracyLokenWeber.com](http://TracyLokenWeber.com).*

## Mental Health 101 – What is Good Mental Health?

*By Sara Daniel, MSW, LCSW, Vice President of Educational Services – SaintA, and Carey Jacobsen, MA, LPC, Director of Clinical Services – SaintA*

### The Three R's of Thriving

For children to achieve positive mental health and well-being, we need to think beyond simply alleviating symptoms or challenges. We need to set our sights on what it takes to thrive. At SaintA, we use a model of practice called the 7 Essential Ingredients. Three of these ingredients, that represent key indicators of thriving, are defined below:

- **Regulation** – Calming practices such as deep breathing, taking a walk, or bouncing a ball become routine. Children are engaged in regulation regularly throughout the day, not just a response to stress or anxiety. A child is aware of what is helpful and advocates for themselves.
- **Relationship** – Positive and healthy connections happen daily from the casual exchange to the more personal connections with friends or family. Connections are genuine where a child can share their true and authentic self.
- **Reason to be** – A sense of purpose, meaning and hope, exists in a child's life that can sustain them even when challenges arise.



Thriving does not mean never needing help. Seeking out support as needed is an integral part of thriving.

## Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action

Youth need trustworthy, supportive adults and mental health education are two insights the OCMH Resiliency Team cited in their Youth Listening Session [Recommendations for Action](#). The Team reviewed all the comments from two OCMH 2020 youth listening sessions and determined they could best contribute to improved youth mental health by elevating the youth's ideas.



First Lady Kathy Evers supports raising up youth voice. She says, “Young people want to share their thoughts on youth mental health and have important things to say. I am pleased to work with OCMH to raise youth voices on how to improve mental health.”

The report offers six insights from the youth and 11 recommendations for action. The recommendations fall into three categories: 1) Organizational/Culture, 2) Youth Voice, and 3) Mental Health Education. By releasing the Recommendations for Action, OCMH hopes to challenge organizations and individuals to reflect on the Recommendations and consider how they can be incorporated into policy, practice, and culture.

Highlights include:

- Insights
  - Youth need trustworthy, reliable adults. They want multiple, diverse adults who can talk with them about mental health so they can find someone who shares their identity in one or more ways.
  - Mental health education is needed for young people on a continuum across grades, lifespan, and in all parts of the educational continuum.
- Recommendations for Action
  - Create youth leadership opportunities in school as well as community organizations.
  - Expand how mental health is defined to include the whole person (eating, feeling, learning, etc.). Connect mental health to other activities and curriculum.

“These action recommendations offer concrete practice and policy steps that communities can take to improve the mental health of young people,” said OCMH Director Linda Hall.

See the entire list of Insights and Recommendations for Action [here](#).

## OCMH Updates

### Youth Discuss the Impact of Social Media

OCMH held two Youth Listening Sessions in September focusing on the impact of social media. Youth ages 13-24 from across the state participated. Highlights of what they said include:

- When asked what advice on social media they would give to younger siblings, participants thought there should be greater guardrails on social media. They felt they were exposed to too much too soon.
- Positives of social media included it being fun, and it provides distractions and meaningful connections.
- Negatives included exposure to unhealthy content (sexual, violent, harmful), it is possible to form a habit of seeking out negative content, and body image concerns.
- Participant recommendations included young people should work to curate positive content and parents should control use.



Partnering with OCMH to offer the sessions were the Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

## Legislative & Policy Update

SB 253. Suicide prevention grants of up to \$25,000 may be awarded by the Department of Health Services to organizations or coalitions of organizations, including a city, village, town, county, or tribe, if the receiving organization provides a matching amount equal to at least 20% of the grant. On October 19, the Senate Committee on Human Services, Children, and Families passed SB 253 on a unanimous vote.

## Children's Mental Health in Professional Literature

*OCMH Research Analyst - Advanced Kate McCoy spotlights new, open access articles about children's mental health.*



American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children's Hospital Association: Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. [Read the article.](#)

Association of Childhood Adversity with Morbidity and Mortality in U.S. Adults: A Systematic Review. [Read the article.](#)

Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness and What We Can Do About It. [Read the article.](#)

The COVID-19 Pandemic Disrupted both School Bullying and Cyberbullying. [Read the article.](#)

More articles are available on the [OCMH Website](#).

## Of Interest

**November is Native American Heritage Month** – Recognizing the significant contributions the first Americans made to the establishment and growth of the U.S. [Learn more.](#)

**National Family Caregivers Month is November** – Providing a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country. [Learn more.](#)

Gov. Evers Announces **\$2 Million Investment to Support Mental and Behavioral Health Services** for Underserved Wisconsinites – [Learn more.](#)

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## PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESSES SAY IT FEELS LIKE:

