



Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action

The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) held two Youth Listening Sessions in 2020:

- May 21st – Youth and Young Adult Mental Health
- August 27th – Mental Health in the Educational Environment

Youth from across the state joined virtual listening sessions for an open discussion on several youth mental health topic areas. The OCMH Resiliency Team of mental health professionals, persons with lived experience, advocates, and youth after reviewing all of the comments decided that they could best contribute to improved youth mental health by elevating the youth's ideas. Using a Human-Centered Design process to analyze what youth said during the sessions, the Resiliency Team developed action recommendations. A Human-Centered Design process is a framework for understanding problems and imagining possible solutions that involve, at every step, the perspective of the people close to the issue.

INSIGHTS

In their analysis, the Resiliency Team reached the following insights from the youth comments:

1. Youth value a safe and diverse school culture that acknowledges mental health stigma and marginalization and supports trusting relationships.
2. Youth value just, diverse, and inclusive cultures and systems that normalize mental health and recognize it as a part of everyday lives.
3. Youth want to lead and guide training, services, and system structure to ensure diverse representation and social justice.
4. Youth need trustworthy, reliable adults who create safe spaces for them to talk about mental health. They want supportive adults who are educated in mental health and informed about resources available. They want schools to have a diverse group of supportive adults so they can find someone who shares one or more of their identities (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, faith, etc.) so as to better understand them and their experience.
5. Mental health education is needed for young people on a continuum across grades, lifespan, and in all parts of the educational continuum.
6. Young people need to have the knowledge and skills to be able to self-advocate and to support their peers who are experiencing mental health challenges while maintaining boundaries.



Recommendations for Action

Based on a thorough assessment of youth statements, the Resiliency Team makes Recommendations for Action across three categories: 1) Organizational/Culture, 2) Youth Voice, and 3) Mental Health Education.

What you can do: Organizations are encouraged to reflect on these recommendations and how they can be incorporated into policy, practice, and culture.

Organizational/Culture	
Recommendation	Resources/Examples
Advocate for policies that normalize mental health (e.g., mental health days, integrating mental health into wellness). Allow youth to develop guidance on mental health policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some states have passed bills permitting children to be absent from school for mental or behavioral health reasons. Read an article. NAMI Public Policy Platform – Education and Employment, section 5.4 (pg. 41 – 42).
Set up facilities to accommodate mental health needs of youth. For example, create spaces that are safe for students (e.g., multisensory rooms, spaces to process and seek a friendly person).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wisconsin DPI School-based Mental Health grants can be used for this. Check with local funders and state public instruction to see if other grant money is available.
Leadership reflects those served. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment/hiring processes should accommodate the skills of diverse applicants. Recruit for positions in different ways, with active outreach to reach diverse populations. Emphasize diversity expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review local hiring policies and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work being done.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trusted adults are in place who understand and relate to students’ mental health. Youth have the ability to hold adults accountable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wisconsin Initiative for Stigma Elimination (WISE) campaign: I Seek to Listen & Support/Safe Person Decal Wisconsin Youth Empowered Solutions

Youth Voice	
Recommendation	Resources/Examples
Create youth leadership opportunities in school as well as community organizations (e.g., youth seat on school board, formal participation in school governance, teaching youth how to lead their Individual Education Plans). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These positions must reflect shared power and not be token roles on committees/etc. Adults support youth in leadership roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCMH – Bring Lived Experience to Your Work Wisconsin PATCH
Create opportunities for discussion on culture, identities, diversity, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold youth listening sessions Use a Human Centered-Design process when studying problems Youth Centered Design Toolkit DHS Youth Engagement Toolkit

Mental Health Education	
Recommendation	Resources/Examples
Mental health professional development/ education for broad range of people who work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center (WISH)

<p>with youth (teachers, school administrators, providers, non-profit staff, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health First Aid • DPI Trauma Sensitive Schools • Compassion Resilience toolkit • Sources of Strength
<p>Adults know about the mental health resources available for youth and share them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health First Aid • Hopeline • Suicide Prevention, Prevent Suicide WI • Suicide Hotline – 800.273.8255 • Resilient WI
<p>Prioritize Social Emotional Learning for younger children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health • DPI Social and Emotional Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand how mental health is defined to include the whole person (eating, feeling, learning, etc.). • Connect mental health to other activities and curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPI Mental Health Literacy and Wellness Education • OCMH Trauma and Recovery Project
<p>Parent/caregiver awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of Strength • Dinner Table Resilience (La Crosse Area YMCA)