Presenter Disclosures

22nd Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health
Washington DC

There are no financial interests to disclose
The Emotional Health Check-in:
A Tool for Engaging, Assessing and Supporting Distressed Students

Kelly Thompson, LICSW & Ann Vander Stoep, Ph.D.
Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

- Seattle Public School staff, students and parents
- National Institute of Health
- Seattle Children’s Hospital
- Loeb Family Foundation
- Elizabeth McCauley, PhD
- University of Washington School Mental Assessment, Research and Training (SMART) Center
We want to introduce you to:

- Background on the Emotional Health Check-up (EHC)
- Four parts of the EHC
- Steps for conducting the Student Check-in

We look forward to your feedback:

- Is the Check-in right for you and your setting?
What is the Emotional Health Check-up?

A program that...

- Identifies distressed students via screening
- Includes a brief in-school follow-up interviews for students who screen positive
- Connects with parents
- Links students to resources
Mental health disorders compromise the well-being of 20-40% of young people in the U.S.\(^1\)

An estimated 50% of failure to complete secondary school can be attributed to unaddressed mental health conditions in the U.S. student population\(^2\)

Middle school is a good time for early intervention to address the upsurge in depression that occurs between 15–18 years

Both clinical and non-clinical levels of distress can adversely affect a student’s development and academic performance

Where?....middle school

- Emotional health supports within the school setting
  - access to large, diverse groups of young people who are otherwise uninsured and underserved ¹
  - adolescents more likely to seek health care at school than in health care settings²,³

- Contributes to SEL, MTSS, TIS

When?...transition to middle school

- Transition to middle school can be exciting AND stressful... new place, new people, new schedule, new expectations

- Stress can lead to distress, and if students experience long-term distress, it can affect emotional health and academic performance

- Transition offers critical opportunity to increase support
Theory of Change

- **Universal screening** is needed to detect distress in 11-12 year olds.
- **Early identification** affords opportunities for early supportive interventions.
- **Increasing support** reduces distress.
- **Reducing distress** enables students to perform better in school and deters emotional health problems.
## Risk of middle school alcohol use initiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable*</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct problems</td>
<td>1.03 (0.99-1.06)</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression symptoms</td>
<td>1.02 (0.98-1.06)</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety symptoms</td>
<td>0.98 (0.96-1.06)</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful life events</td>
<td>1.05 (0.88-1.15)</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent support</td>
<td>0.98 (0.85-1.09)</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>1.06 (0.96-1.18)</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support x Time</td>
<td>0.78 (0.61-0.95)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.07 (1.00-1.15)</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Controlled for sex, age, race/ethnicity, household SES

EHC reaches students and families...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2001-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students recruited</td>
<td>65%-85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number screened</td>
<td>3,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check-in needed</td>
<td>20%-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support plan needed</td>
<td>~60% of students getting Check-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EHC links students to support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of plan</th>
<th>Academic: 24%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social: 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Counselor: 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health: 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful linkage</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Emotional Health Check-up

1. Get Everyone Onboard
2. Universal Classroom Screening
3. Student Check-In
4. Parent Phone Call
Getting Set

- Elevator speech
- Champions
- Right for your school?
- Timing?
Screening Approaches

**Universal**
General Public

**Selective**
Targeted Risk Groups

**Indicated**
Targeted High-Risk Individuals

*Increasing Proportion of Children Screening Positive for Emotional Health Problems*

*Increasing Risk of Missing Distressed Children*
EHC Screening

All students invited.
Parent permission required.
Active/passive consent matters.
Administered in 6th grade classrooms.
One school period.
Use Mood and Feelings Questionnaire.
The Emotional Health Check-up

1. Get Everyone Onboard
2. Universal Classroom Screening
3. Student Check-In
4. Parent Phone Call
Overview of the Student Check-in

1. Brief assessment of the student’s need for academic, social, or emotional health support.

2. Develop plans for students who need support.

3. Link student to support services when needed.
Guiding Principles

✓ Be Strength Based, Upbeat & Collaborative
  - *I’m really happy to meet you and I am looking forward to hearing more about how things are going for you.*

✓ Normalize
  - *Lots of kids are stressed out about things going on in their lives*

✓ Convey a sense of hope
  - *I’ve worked with a lot of students who were stressed out and I know that with support, things can get better.*
The Check-in

1. Investigate stressors and concerns: the causes and intensity of distress
2. Evaluate Student Strengths
3. Decide who needs a Support Plan
4. Develop a Support Plan
5. Implement the Plan: connect with parents and/or other supports
The Check-in Steps

1. Walk through Three Domains to investigate the causes and intensity of distress

   Goal: Confirm distress

   Goal: Understand how distress is interfering with the student’s functioning...
   Academically
   Socially
   Emotionally
The Check-in Steps

2. Evaluate the Student’s Strengths

✓ Support Network
✓ Self-Confidence
✓ Interpersonal Skills
  - communication
  - conflict resolution
  - get along with others
✓ Coping Skills
  - problem solving
  - information and help seeking
  - self-regulation
The Check-in Steps


Goal: Weighing concerns and strengths using The Support Plan Decision Grid

Three Outcomes:

1. Concerns outweigh strengths = support plan
2. Strengths outweigh concern = no plan
3. No concerns = no plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Is there a concern?</th>
<th>What is going well:</th>
<th>What supports are in place?</th>
<th>Need Plan?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YES OR NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What is not going well:
- Adequate to address concern?
- Yes or No
The Check-in Steps

4. Developing a Support Plan
   (utilising natural and informal supports as much as possible)

   Five Strategies
   1. Reduce Stressors
   2. Improve interpersonal Skills
   3. Develop coping strategies
   4. Build self-confidence
   5. Strengthen and/or activate the support network
5. Brainstorm ideas to create a Menu of Options
   - Encourage all ideas
   - Take turns providing ideas
   - Use best friend

   - Evaluating the Pros and Cons of each idea
   - The helpful and harmful about each idea
   - Client chooses an idea to try first
The Check-in Steps

7. Support Action Plan:
   - Mini-steps: What, Who, When

8. Anticipate barriers:
   - Internal Barriers;/External Barriers

   - Review steps
   - Get a commitment to try the plan
   - Discuss call home
9. Working with Parents/Caregivers

- When you plan to connect with a caregiver
  - Collaborating on the message
  - What “needs” to be communicated
  - Back to Confidentiality message

- Partnering to finalize a plan

- Encouraging and supporting linkage
  - Explore Barriers
Enhancing Motivation

**Strategy:** Check on ownership of the plan.
- *Do we have a plan that you feel good about?*
- *What would you add or take out?*

**Strategy:** Rate confidence in the plan.
- *On a scale of 1-10 where “1” is not confident and “10” is very confident, how confident are you that the plan will be helpful?*

**Strategy:** Explore hesitancy without rating.
- *What would help you feel ready to try the plan?*
2008: Motivational Interviewing

Examined the impact of using motivational interviewing (MI) during the Check-in and Parent Phone Call

- **Intervention**
  - MI approach with student during Check-in
  - Phone call to parent included MI approach

- **Control**
  - No-MI approach with student
  - Letter home to parent

A higher proportion of students in the intervention group (with MI) (78%) were linked to recommended support services, compared to the control group (36%).
Impact: Parents/Caregivers

Reported benefits for parents included:

- Having another person ("someone neutral" "with outside eyes") give perspective on their child’s emotional health
  - Reassured about child’s emotional status during transition
  - Confirmation of concerns

- Increased communication with their child

- Increased access to resources and helpful advice

- Increased motivation to take action for the family

- Improved relationship with the school
Impact
What caregivers say...

- It gave us the incentive to start solving the issues.
- The program relayed concerns to me that my child would not have told me.
- I liked an outside set of eyes looking at my child. Getting the school interested in help for my child was so helpful.
- It alleviated my worry about whether he was adjusting well to know that someone else thought so too.
- It was helped me to find resources. I am a single mom without a lot of time.
Impact
What kids say...

- It helped me with opening up.
- It helped with my family as well as me.
- It helped me think about what I was doing more.
- Helped me focus more.
- It was good cuz it got me into a study skill class.
- It was helpful to know that there is always someone to talk to at school.
School Counselors participate in Check-in

Feedback:
- Like the tool: Systematic and structured and students comfortable and more “active”
- New information: students “seen from a different angle”

Benefits:
-Introduced to kids not on the radar early in fall
- More kids introduced in positive way to counselors
- Felt permission to spend more time with students
- Fostered positive connections with parents
School Counselors participate in Check-in

**Challenges:**
- Parents expect more...want info about grades and classroom behavior
- Balancing fall priorities..seeing “prevention” kids vs kids in crisis or on school referral list

**Training:**
- Modeling, practice and supervision important (taping and self-rating)
- Permission for counselors to be “learners” (not experts) at school
Innovation

Public health model of care

universal screening and early intervention resulting in the maximum mental health benefit for the greatest number of youth

Academic, social, emotional health interventions

input from student and parent with linkage to supports beyond traditional mental health system

Sustainable

manualized, scripted and designed for ease of implementation to maximize potential for sustainability
Emotional Health Check-up

- **Grant Proposal**  "Feasibility study for a cluster randomised control trial of Emotional Health Check-up approach to support early intervention for child mental health difficulties in final years of primary school and first years of secondary school," Miranda Wolpert, PhD, PI, United Kingdom, National Institute for Health Research, Health Services & Delivery Research Programme, Submitted 9/5/2017

- **Book**  "Student Stress at the Transition to Middle School... An A to Z Guide for Implementing the EHC"
  Vander Stoep & Thompson, 2017
  W.W. Norton & Company
Thank you

Kelly Thompson
Ann Vander Stoep

kelly3@uw.edu
annv@uw.edu