

Health Justice: New Framework and Findings to Promote School Mental Health

25th Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health

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Welcome!



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Law & policy innovation for the common good.



Healthier communities for all
through equitable laws and
policies.

Presenter Disclosure

25th Annual Conference on Advancing
School Mental Health

There are no relationships to disclose.

AGENDA



- Exclusionary school discipline is a public health issue
- Health justice + recommendations and opportunities for policy and practice
- Restorative justice and mental health in schools
- Discussion: answering frequently asked questions
- Keep the conversation going



Education Policy is Health Policy

An "Ecosystem" Model

Social and psychological

- E.g., Reduce stress, build peer relationships, and social networks

Socioeconomic

- E.g., Economic stability, access to resources

Health behaviors

- E.g., Increased understanding and advocating for health needs

Physical

- E.g., By age 25, individuals with a high school degree can expect to live 11-15 years longer than those who did not complete high school (Rostron et al., 2010)

ACEs, Toxic Stress & Education

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are “traumatic experiences that can have a profound effect on a child’s developing brain and body with lasting impacts on a person’s health throughout her lifespan.”

Source: Center for Youth Wellness white paper “[An Unhealthy Dose of Stress](#)” (June 2013)

Toxic stress is “the extreme, frequent, or extended activation of the body’s stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult.”

Source: Center for Youth Wellness white paper “[An Unhealthy Dose of Stress](#)” (June 2013)

- **Dose response relationship between ACEs and student learning** (Grevstad, 2007; Delaney-Black, et al. 2002; Sanger, et al., 2000)
- **Inability to regulate behavior or control the expression of emotions** (Hertel, 2011)
- **Association between chronic absenteeism (a predictive factor for school dropout) and ACEs** (Stempe, Bronsert & Allison, 2017)

Exclusionary School Discipline:

Describes any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from their usual educational setting



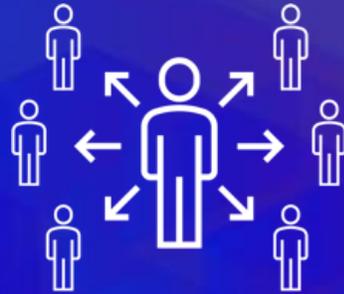
Exclusionary School Discipline is a public health issue:

- *Deprives students of their education, a critical social determinant of health*
- *Feeds into the school-to-prison pipeline*

Exclusionary School Discipline is a Mental Health Issue



**Undermines
critical protective
factors**

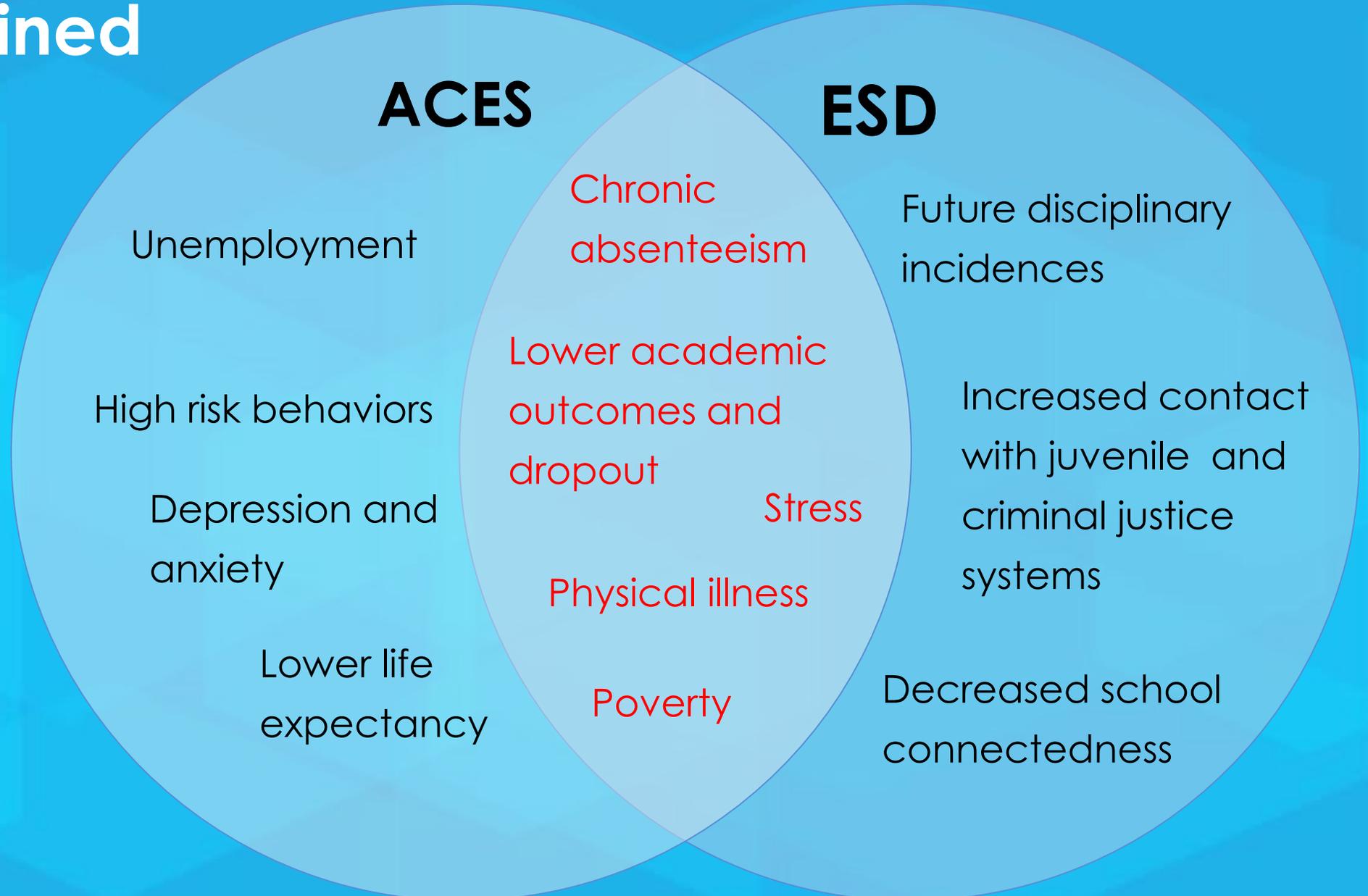


**Decreases
feelings of school
safety**



**Impacts psychosocial
functioning of
students**

The Combined Effects



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What can be done?

Eliminating harmful school discipline policies is a step in the right direction, but it is just one step ...

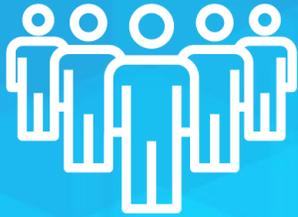
Health Justice

And why it matters



Health Justice “requires that all persons have the same chance to be free from hazards that jeopardize health, fully participate in society, and access opportunity. Health justice addresses the social determinants of health that result in poor health for individuals and consequential negative outcomes for society at large.”

(Benfer, 2015)



What does a health justice approach *look like*?

4 Key Elements



Ending discrimination and racial bias



Prohibiting, amending, or repealing laws adversely affecting health



Developing primary prevention policies



Listening to, engaging, and empowering affected communities

Health justice to address mental health in *schools*

- ✓ Ending discrimination and racial bias
- ✓ Prohibiting, amending, or repealing laws adversely affecting health



Decrease reliance
on exclusionary
school discipline

Health justice to address mental health in *schools*

- ✓ Developing primary prevention policies
- ✓ Listening to, engaging, and empowering affected communities



Scale up mental health and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)

Health justice to address mental health in *schools*

- ✓ Developing primary prevention policies
- ✓ Listening to, engaging, and empowering affected communities



Prioritize critical
protective factors

Key Takeaways

*An effective health justice
approach requires ...*



**#1: *Decreasing* reliance
on exclusionary school
discipline**

**#2: *Scaling up* mental
health and multi-tiered
systems of support (MTSS)**

**#3: *Prioritizing* critical
*protective factors***

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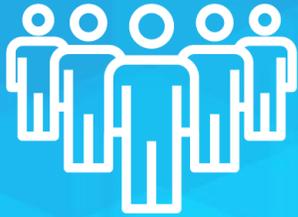
Restorative Justice in Schools

What is it?



Evans and Vaandering (2016) identified *three* core components of RJE that inform the implementation of practices and processes: (a) nurturing healthy relationships, (b) building processes that support the repair of harm and the transformation of conflict, and (c) supporting learning environments characterized by justice and equity

SOURCE: Evans, K.R., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative justice in education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and hope in schools.*



What does restorative justice in schools *look* like?

3 Tiers of *whole school frameworks*



Tier 1: Community Building and Relationships (Prevention)



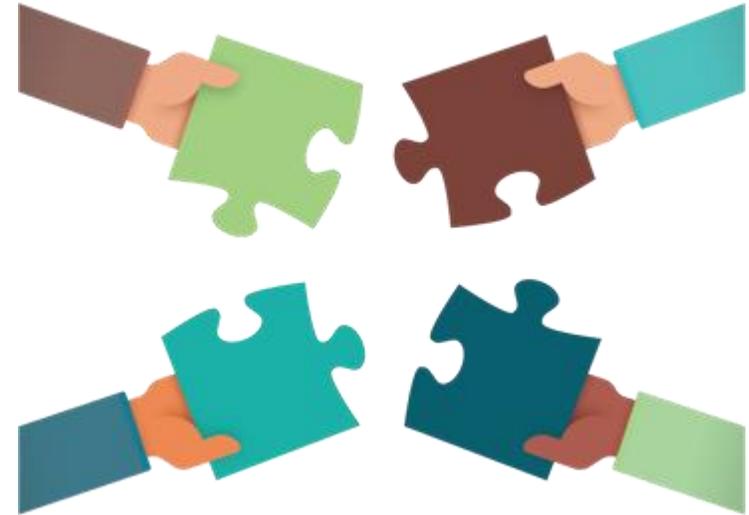
Tier 2: Restorative Responses/Processes for Harm & Conflict (Intervention and Repair)



Tier 3: Supportive Re-entry Supports (Intensive and Individualized)

How does this all *fit* together?

Understanding the connections between restorative justice and health and wellbeing



#1: Reduces reliance on punitive discipline

#2: Support, development and enhancement of protective health factors

Restorative justice and mental health in *schools*

#1: *Decreased* reliance on exclusionary school discipline

- Augustine et al. (2018) 16% drop in suspensions in K-12 (Pennsylvania)
- Carroll (2017) 50% drop in full-day suspensions for high school students (California)
- Fowler et al. (2016) 63% drop in suspension rate in K-12 (Virginia)
- González (2015) 47% drop in suspension rate; 41% drop for Black students; 54% drop for Latino students (Colorado)
- Gregory et al. (2018) 51% reduction in suspension rate in K-12 (Colorado)
- Hashim et al. (2018) Drop in suspension rates for Black, Latino, Asian, White, disabled, English learner, and free/reduced-price lunch eligible students in K-12 (California)

Restorative justice and mental health in *schools*

#2: *Positive school climate*

National School Climate Center defines four essential areas of: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment (Cohen, 2013).

Source: Cohen, J. (2013). Creating a positive school climate: A foundation for resilience. In S. Goldstein, & R.B. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 411–423). New York, NY: Springer US.

Restorative justice and mental health in *schools*

#3: *Enhanced* connectedness



School connectedness



Peer connectedness



Familial connectedness

Restorative justice and mental health in *schools*

#4: *Development of* social and emotional literacy

- Seven-year case study of small urban high school, students identified **self-efficacy**, **conflict resolution skills**, and **leadership development** as outcomes of whole-school RJ practices (González, Sattler, and Buth, 2018)
- Two-year ethnographic study with adolescent girls in public urban high school found that restorative circles promoted **refined anger management**, **active listening** and **interpersonal sensitivity**, key aspects of pro-social behavior (Schumacher, 2014)
- PK-5 students identified RJ as increasing **student-teacher connectedness**, **self-regulation**, **self-awareness**, and **improved peer interactions** (Tolefree, 2017)

Key Takeaways

*Restorative justice
practices and policies as
structural health
interventions*



**#1: *Decreases* reliance on
exclusionary school
discipline**

**#2: *Enhances* protective
health and mental health
factors**

**#3: *Supports* mental health
and multi-tiered systems of
support (MTSS)**

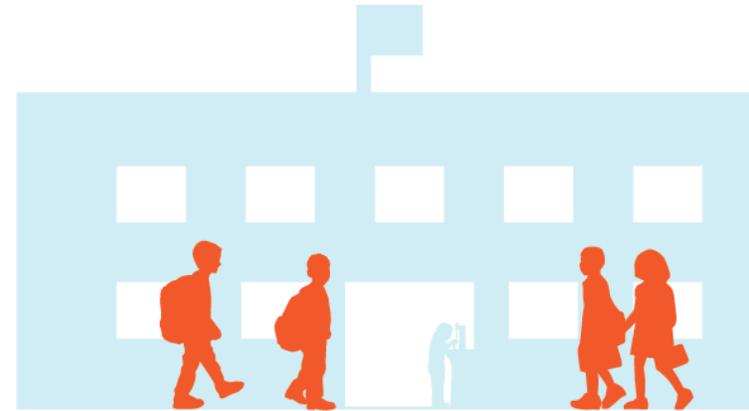
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Question 1:

Why is this conversation important in the context of COVID-19?



Response 1:

Why is this conversation important in the context of COVID-19?



Increased stress and trauma and widening health inequities



Decreased connectedness



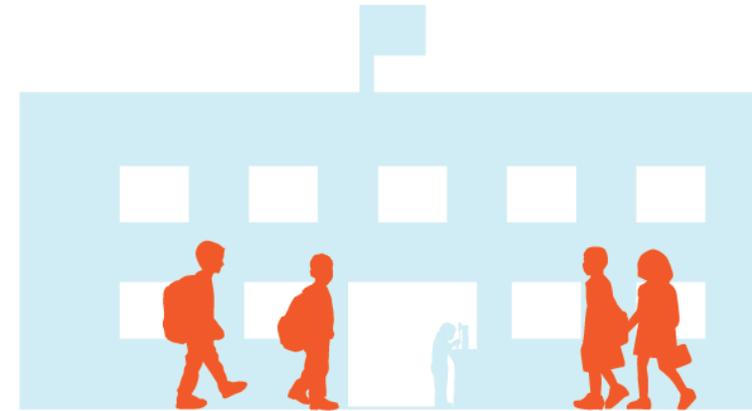
Punitive school discipline practices are still operating in virtual class settings



However, there are opportunities for remote positive interventions

Question 2:

How can we secure buy-in for schoolwide change?



Response 2:

How can we secure buy-in for schoolwide change?



Improved attendance, academic performance, graduation rates, and overall well-being



Decreased reliance on punitive school discipline practices



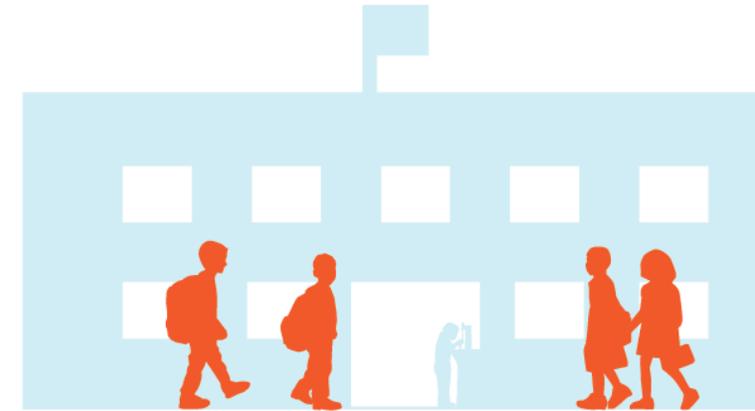
Increased protective factors (e.g., school climate and connectedness) and feelings of safety



Strong return on investment (Belfield et al, 2015)

Question 3:

What can each of us do to create positive change?



Response 3:

What can each of us do to create positive change?



Understand the symptoms of exclusionary school discipline and ACEs



Find out whether exclusionary school discipline exists in your school



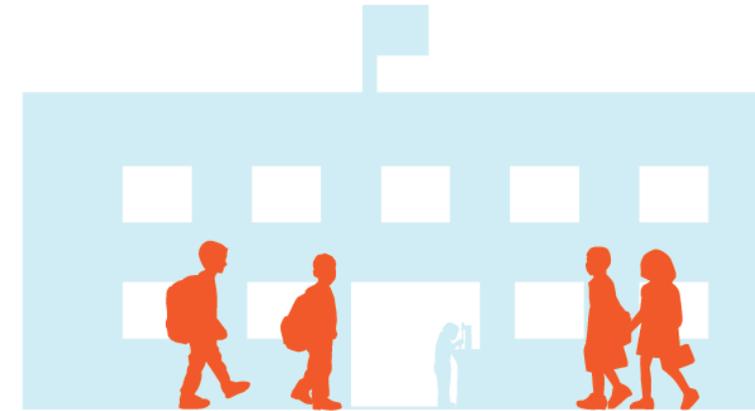
Public health and medical communities are key partners



Seek out resources to learn more

Question 4:

Where can we learn more?



Response 4:

Where can we learn more?



For more, visit us at:
changelabsolutions.org

Resources:

- The Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality [resources and reports](#)
- **School Discipline is a Public Health Crisis** (Bill of Health [digital symposium](#) piece, 2020)
- **Defunding School Police Doesn't Go Far Enough** (EdWeek op-ed, 2020)
- **School Discipline Practices: A Public Health Crisis and an Opportunity for Reform** (ChangeLab Solutions issue brief, 2019)
- **Health Equity, School Discipline Reform and Restorative Justice** (*Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* article, 2019)
- **Creating Healthy School Climates** (ChangeLab Solutions virtual training series, 2018)

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Keep the conversation going:

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Thank you!