

# 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*



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# 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?

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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



# Why?...distress impedes learning

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Mental health disorders compromise the well-being of 20-40% of young people in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

An estimated 50% of failure to complete secondary school can be attributed to unaddressed mental health conditions in the U.S. student population<sup>2</sup>

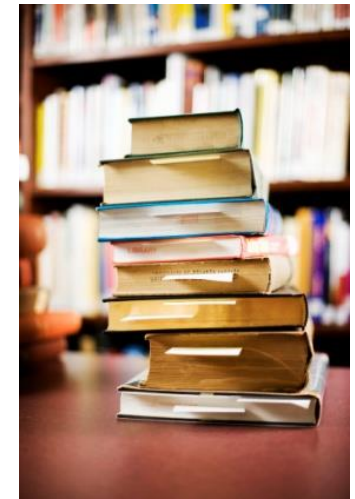
Middle school is a good time for early intervention to address the upsurge in depression that occurs between 15–18 years

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

<sup>1</sup>Costello et al (2006) *J AACAP*; <sup>2</sup>Vander Stoep et al (2003) *J Behav Health Serv Research*

# Where?...middle school

- **Emotional health supports within the school setting**
  - access to large, diverse groups of young people who are otherwise *uninsured* and *underserved* <sup>1</sup>
  - adolescents more likely to seek health care at school than in health care settings<sup>2,3</sup>
- **Contributes to SEL, MTSS, TIS**



<sup>1</sup>Zimmerman (2005) *Health Services Research*; <sup>2</sup>Farmer et al (2003) *Psychiatric Services*; <sup>3</sup>Lyon, Vander Stoep, et al (2011)

# 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

**Multivariate  
discrete  
time  
survival  
analysis**

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

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

McCarty, Rhew et al (2011) *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 26:351-357



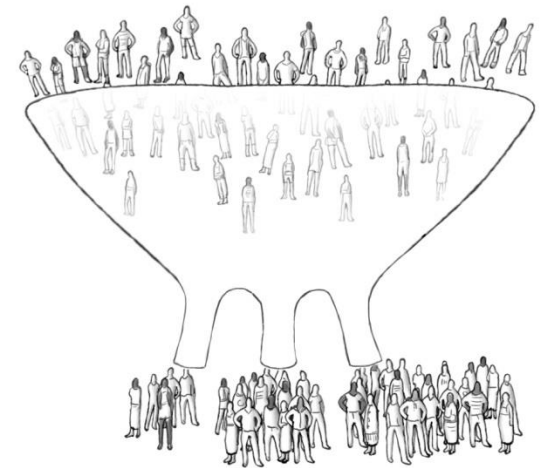
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# EHC reaches students and families...

<b>Years</b>	<b>2001-2010</b>
<b>Students recruited</b>	<b>65%-85%</b>
<b>Number screened</b>	<b>3,266</b>
<b>Check-in needed</b>	<b>20%-30%</b>
<b>Support plan needed</b>	<b>~60% of students getting Check-in</b>



# EHC links students to support

<b>Type of plan</b>	<b>Academic: 24%</b> <b>Social: 14%</b> <b>School Counselor: 45%</b> <b>Mental Health: 12%</b>
<b>Successful linkage</b>	<b>72%</b>



# The Emotional Health Check-up

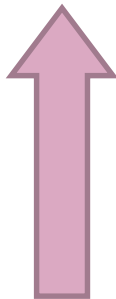


**1. Get Everyone Onboard**

**2. Universal Classroom Screening**

3. Student Check-In

4. Parent Phone Call





# Getting Set

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



# Screening Approaches

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**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

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All students invited.

Parent permission required.

Active/passive consent matters.

Administered in 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms.

One school period.

Use *Mood and Feelings Questionnaire*.



# The Emotional Health Check-up

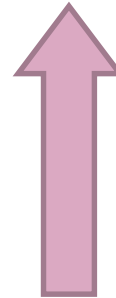


1. Get Everyone Onboard

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**3. Student Check-In**

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# 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

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✓ **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

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

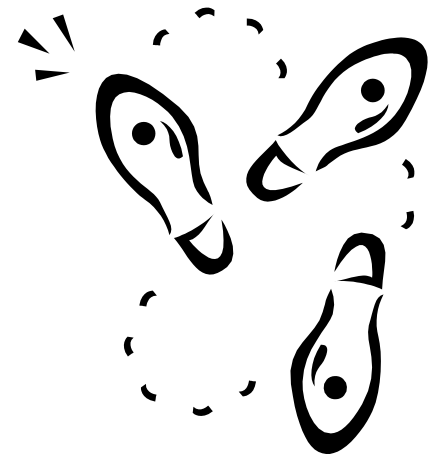
Goal: Confirm distress

Goal: Understand how distress is interfering with the student's functioning...

Academically

Socially

Emotionally



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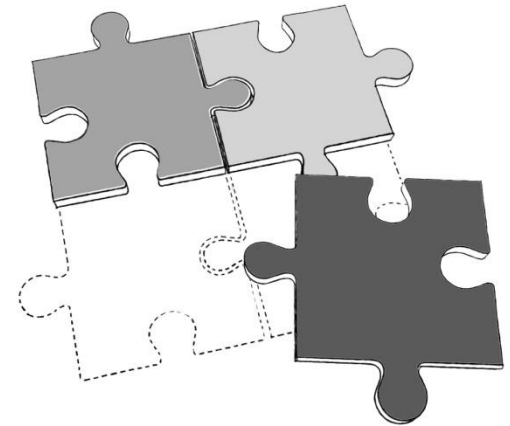


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# The Check-in Steps

## 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

## 3. Decide who needs a Support Plan.

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

# The Decision Grid

**Academic**  
**Is there a**  
**concern?**

**YES**  
**OR**  
**NO**

What is going well:

What is not going well:

What supports are in place?

Adequate to address concern?

Yes or No

**Need**  
**Plan?**

YES

OR

NO







# The Check-in Steps

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## 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

# The Check-in Steps

## 5. Brainstorm ideas to create a Menu of Options

- ✓ Encourage all ideas
- ✓ Take turns providing ideas
- ✓ Use best friend



## 6. Support Plan: Evaluate Options

- ✓ 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



## 9. Support Plan: Finalize a Plan

- 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

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**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

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## 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

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## 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.*



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# School Counselors participate in Check-in

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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*



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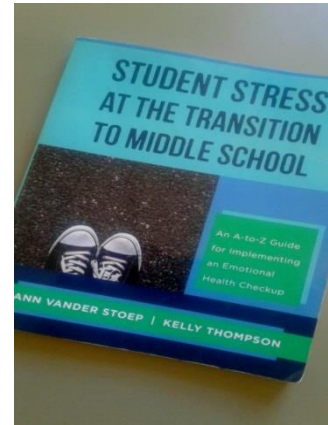
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# Emotional Health Check-up

- **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

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