How Do We Start? Creating a Plan for School Mental Health Screening

Miranda Zahn, PhD

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Learning Objectives

- Identify teaming and collaboration best practices for mental health screening.

- Understand needs assessment and screening target selection.

- Identify a procedure for selecting a mental health screening tool.

Presenter: Dr. Miranda Zahn

- Assistant Professor of School Psychology, University of South Dakota

- Consultant, The National Center for School Mental Health

- Background in school psychology

- My lens: white / caucasian, she / her / hers, cisgender, heterosexual, non-religious, middle class, non-disabled

State of Schools

- 1 in 5 children and adolescents have mental health needs that require intervention

<div align="right">Carter et al., 2010</div>

- 50% of all lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 14

<div align="right">Kessler et al., 2005</div>

- 1 in 8 of MTSS schools engage in universal mental health screening

<div align="right">Bruhn, Woods-Groves, & Huddle, 2014</div>

Mental Health

Social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes that contribute to an individual's well being

- Mental health impacts education, employment, and interpersonal relationships throughout the lifespan
- Mental health contributes to perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, and the ability to realize one's potential

World Health Organization, 2014

Mental Health Conditions

Disturbance (e.g., excess or deficit) in social, emotional, or behavioral functioning

- Mental health conditions affect a student's cognitions, emotions, moods, and behaviors.
- Mental health conditions cause distress and impact functioning in social, educational, and family activities.
- Examples:
  - Anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, schizophrenia

National Alliance on Mental Health, 2018

Cultural Considerations

- Theories, definitions, and practices have emerged from Western cultural traditions and a Western understanding of the human condition

- 5 key components of cultural diversity that have implications for MH
  - Emotional Expression
  - Shame
  - Power Distance
  - Collectivism
  - Spirituality and Religion

"Culture influences what gets defined as a problem, how the problem is understood, and which solutions to the problem are acceptable."

Hernandez et al., 2009

Universal Mental Health Screening

A population-based, preventative procedure to assess an individual's likelihood of developing a mental health condition

- Using the approach, all students are screened and provided the same opportunity for potential early identification and service provision
- Benefits:
  - Reduce risk or impact of mental health conditions
  - Obtain a baseline for future monitoring and assessment
  - Cost efficient approach

Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016; O'Connell, 2009

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Mental Health Screening within MTSS

Tier 3 – Intensive school or community intervention

Tier 2 – Targeted mental health intervention

Tier 1 – Universal mental health screening, climate screening

Screening Action Steps

Convene a Team

Generate Buy-in and Support

Clarify Goals

Identify Available Intervention and Referral Resources

Create a Timeline

Identify Staffing and Budget Resources

Develop Administrative Policies and Procedures

Shared Decision Making: Mental Health Team

A team of school and community stakeholders at a school or district level that **meets regularly, uses data-based decision-making, and relies on action planning** to support student mental health.

National Center For School Mental Health

National School Mental Health Curriculum

Mental Health Team Composition

- School Mental Health Professional
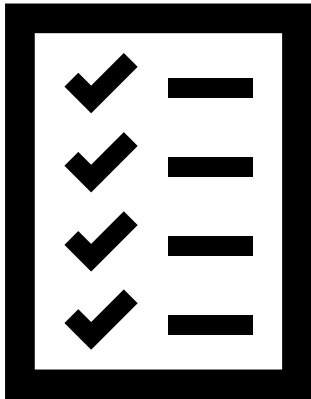- Administrator with Decision-Making Power
- Educators
- Families
- Students

Identifying Mental Health Needs at Your School

- What to screen?
  - Socio-emotional functioning
  - Internalizing concerns (e.g., anxiety, depression)
  - Externalizing concerns (e.g., aggression, attention)
  - Suicidality
  - Trauma

- One-size does not fit all:
  - Self report, teacher report, or parent report
  - Internalizing and externalizing symptoms often have significant overlap

Generating Buy-In: *Time*

- Most screeners can be administered directly to students and only take *less than 30 minutes*
- *Decisions* about student needs could be made *more quickly*

- Prevention and early intervention means *less time spent reacting* to school-based behavior problems in the future

Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016

Generating Buy-In: *Money*

- Screening is **more cost effective and accurate** than training teachers to identify hidden warning signs
- Preventing more severe mental health problems through early service delivery means **reduced intervention costs**
- Parents likely to seek outside resources when screening data is presented, **reducing burden on school personnel**

Burke et al, 2013; Kuo & Stoep, 2009

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Generating Buy-In: *Outcomes*

- Screening *identifies more students* with mental health challenges - especially internalizing
- 70% of students who screened for mental health problems *began therapy* when recommendations were provided to parents
- Identifying students early means we can *prevent* school-based challenges instead of only reacting to them

- Can inform *student-specific* and *school-wide* practices

Anderson et al, 2019; Gould et al, 2009; Kuo & Stoep, 2009

Select an Appropriate Screening Tool

- Valid and reliable for your population
- Free or feasible cost
- Feasible time to administer and score
- Adequate training and technical assistance
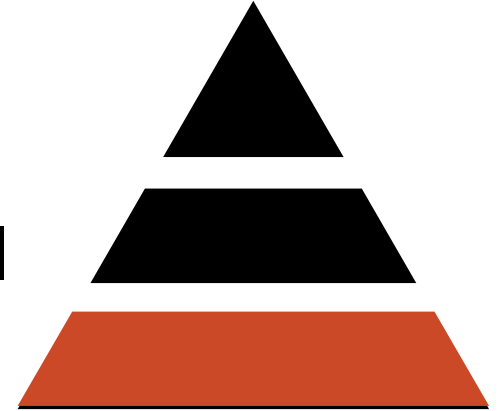- Aligns with goals

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Mental Health Screening Tools

Universal Tier 1

- Broadband and brief instruments; climate instruments

Selected Tier 2

- Narrowband instruments

Indicated Tier 3

- Diagnostic or classification instruments

Broadband Instruments

- ***Purpose:*** Identify a range of psychosocial concerns and protective factors within individual students

- ***Examples:***
  - BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 BESS)
  - Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS)
  - Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS-IE)
  - Youth Internalizing + Externalizing Problems Screeners (YIEPS)

Climate Instruments

- *Purpose:* Identify perceptions of invested parties regarding systems functioning and belongingness

- *Examples:*
  - ED School Climate Survey (EDSCLS)
  - Identification with School Questionnaire (ISQ)
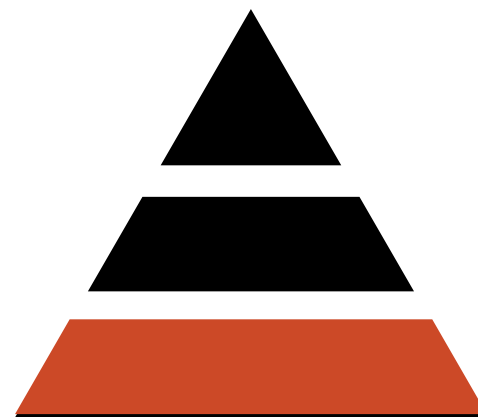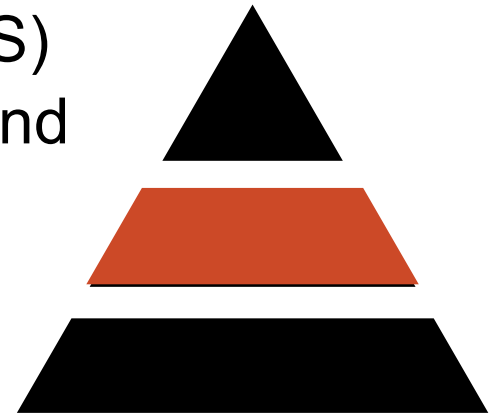 - School Burnout Inventory (SBI)

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Narrowband Instruments

- ***Purpose:*** Understand if individuals have characteristics related to specific mental health needs

- ***Examples:***
  - Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC)
  - Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)
  - Traumatic Stress Screen for Children and Adolescents (TSSCA)

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Choosing a Tier to Screen

- Align to intervention options
- Understand community comfort and goals
- Consider most urgent issue
- Account for system capacity
- Hypothesize base rate

Create Implementation Plan

- Identify population for initial roll out
  - Initial pilot? One grade level?
- Develop contingencies
  - immediate high-risk follow up
  - multiple gate assessment
  - intervention
  - progress monitoring

Communication Plan

Notify families of screening procedures

| Automated email, phone call, or text message | Information on school website | Mail or flyers | Information in registration packet |

Passive consent (opt-out consent)

Follow-up procedures require active consent

Resources

- SHAPE Assessment Library - https://www.theshapesystem.com/assessmentlibrary/

- Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools - https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ready_set_go_review_mh_screening_in_schools_508.pdf

- School Mental Health Quality Guide: Screening - https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/media/SOM/Microsites/NCSMH/Documents/Quality-Guides/Screening-1.27.20.pdf

- US DOE Mental Health Screening Tools for K-12 - https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/10-MntlHlthScrnTlsGrK-12-508.pdf

- School Mental Health Screening Playbook - https://traumasupportforschools.org/school-mental-health-screening-handbook/

- Module 4 of the National School Mental Health Curriculum: Screening - https://mhttcnetwork.org/media/1932

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Next Sessions

How Do We Respond? Legal and Ethical Follow-Up for School Mental Health Screening
May 31, 12-1pm CT

How Do We Continue? Organization and Sustainability for School Mental Health Screening
June 21, 12-1pm CT

Thank you!

Q&A

Dr. Miranda Zahn

miranda.r.zahn@usd.edu