



## MASP COVID-19 Response Model of Practice

Michigan is currently experiencing many difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Developing new and creative ways to support the educational, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students, families, and communities has been a priority during this crisis. As school-based mental health professionals, school psychologists are able and willing to meet the current challenges we face. School psychologists are trained within the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Comprehensive Practice Model (2015). The NASP Comprehensive Model is designed to promote provision of a full range of services for schools and districts. Furthermore, some school psychologists have received training in the NASP PREPaRE curriculum which includes school safety, crisis management, and emergency response training, with a special emphasis on school-based mental health. Utilizing the NASP Comprehensive Model and NASP PREPaRE curriculum (or other crisis response training) school psychologists are well positioned to provide a wide range of support and services to help schools and districts meet the needs of students, families, and communities during this crisis.

### Consultation & Collaboration

A large part of the role of the school psychologist involves consultation and collaboration. Given our current situation, school psychologists are well-suited to provide such collaborative support to students, families, schools, and the community as a whole. To promote learning and mental health and wellness during this difficult time, school psychologists, through direct and indirect consultation, can do the following:

- School psychologists can utilize their training in data-based decision making to determine the level of need at various levels (e.g., individual, group, and systems-wide). With this information, schools are better positioned to meet the community's needs, allocate resources, or direct families to outside agencies or other resources. Furthermore, school psychologists can assist with multiple forms of data collection to monitor risk and resiliency. Data can also be gathered and utilized to progress monitor interventions and other supports.
- School psychologists can provide various resources to help educators, parents, and students. Within their role as practitioners, school psychologists can connect parents and educators to information on how to discuss COVID-19 with students in a developmentally appropriate manner. Also, school psychologists can provide valuable

literature and research related to the mental health difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ways to support mental health and wellness.

- School psychologists are able to support educators with instructional or trauma-informed service delivery, as well as strategies to address any other challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort could include consultation regarding the effects of trauma on learning, as well as the potential signs and symptoms of trauma, and strategies to build resilience, foster connections, and reduce the potential impact of trauma.

School psychologists possess a wealth of knowledge regarding learning difficulties and interventions that can be utilized to ameliorate these challenges. The creation of schoolwide online or distance learning opportunities over the last few weeks have been very challenging for many districts. School psychologists are adept at providing consultation for modifying, adapting, differentiating, and supplementing learning for students, individually and in groups. Also, school psychologists work collaboratively with educators to help develop lessons, which could then be shared with parents, such as implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in a virtual format.

#### Mental Health: Prevention & Intervention

With respect to overall mental health and well-being, school psychologists are highly trained and equipped to provide prevention and intervention services, through direct and indirect formats with educators, students, and parents. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health supports may be implemented through a virtual format that is in accordance with ethical and legal guidelines, such as regulations put forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). School psychologists serve as a vital link in providing students, parents, and educators with mental health support and services, as well as being able to connect them with resources in the community.

#### *Individual or Group Level Services:*

*Prevention.* To help promote resiliency and to mitigate the effects of the current crisis, school psychologists can work with parents, educators, and students, directly or indirectly, to promote physical self-care, emotional self-care, and social care and connection. School psychologists can provide direct psycho-education and support to promote self-care for parents and educators, which in turn supports student mental health and wellness. Further, school psychologists can work directly with students on self-care, such as ensuring proper nutrition and sleep, physical activity, physical hygiene, structure and routine, and monitoring media consumption. In a proactive and preventative manner, school psychologists are able to assess student welfare, identify those who may be at risk, and reduce psychological trauma.

*Intervention.* School psychologists can connect remotely with students and families who are in need of more intense support. For direct mental health services, school psychologists are able to provide individual or group mental health interventions, in order to enhance coping skills and provide students with the support necessary to reduce stress. More intensive, individualized mental health interventions may be necessary when a student experiences fear or grief and loss due to COVID-19. School psychologists can also deliver direct, individualized support to help with anxiety, sadness, depression, social isolation, or trauma related to COVID-19. Further, social isolation is a risk factor associated with increased mental health difficulties, which can contribute to suicidal ideation among children and teens. School psychologists are trained in suicide prevention, assessment, and interventions to support students with these difficulties.

#### *Systems-Level Services:*

*Prevention.* School psychologists are able to work collaboratively with school-based crisis and problem-solving teams to identify students who are at risk in order to provide or connect them with appropriate supports to help mitigate risks. School psychologists can lead professional development for educators and connect families with valuable resources to promote mental health and well-being, support social-emotional learning, as well as to reaffirm safety and security, during this difficult time. School psychologists can also work with teams to help enhance social connectedness by facilitating the use of remote supports and communication for students and families.

*Intervention.* In addition to their participation in the school-wide crisis response team, school psychologists can help support educators with their own mental health and wellness at the individual or group level. This can be accomplished through professional development or individualized supports pertaining to coping skills, stress management, and self-care. School psychologists can also support educators in reducing difficulties associated with physical distancing and remote work.

#### Crisis Response

Crisis response refers to the prevention and response initiatives utilized to address natural and man-made disasters, crises, critical incidents, and tragic events. In addition to training in the NASP Practice Model, some school psychologists have received additional training in the NASP PREPaRE curriculum. This curriculum provides a framework for addressing school safety, crisis management plans, and emergency response.

All schools should have school safety and crisis teams. School psychologists are integral members of these teams. School safety and crisis teams formulate an Emergency Operations Plan

(EOP), or what may be referred to as a crisis response plan. This plan helps schools and districts with various types of emergencies. The crisis response plan provides information that may support pandemic illness planning. Regardless of the status of your crisis response plan, there are a number of specific actions that school crisis response teams can now take to address issues related to COVID-19. School psychologists play an integral role in assisting school safety and crisis teams in modifying, implementing, and evaluating the school's Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) in the following areas:

- *Communication and Warning Actions:*
  - Gather and distribute crisis facts (e.g., how to stay healthy and cope) using multiple modes of communication (e.g., television, social media, email, letters home, voicemail, call-out) in a timely manner and provide information to parents and educators to help talk to children about COVID-19.
- *Public Health Actions:*
  - Encourage families to engage in daily preventative health-promoting behaviors and actions to reduce the spread of infectious disease
- *Medical Actions:*
  - Review and evaluate needs or issues for future events - medical needs are not currently an issue in school-based settings
- *Mental Health Actions:*
  - Provide information regarding how to identify typical crisis reactions and evaluate warning signs
  - Provide resources on how to address stress with positive coping and self-care strategies
  - Identify who to contact for more intensive therapeutic intervention
  - Promote the actions adults can take to ensure student psychological safety and security
- *Continuity of Operations Actions:*
  - Address the continuity of learning activities (e.g., how to continue learning activities if there are school closures or extended absences)
  - Address the order of succession and delegation of authority (e.g., who makes decisions should school administrators get sick)
  - Problem solve and discuss ideas to maintain essential school operations (e.g., what are the essential activities that must not be interrupted, such as payroll, and how will they be maintained during school closures)
  - Develop guidelines for school staff members (e.g., who needs to continue working even during school closures)

- *Recovery Planning:*
  - Consider actions to take should COVID-19 be present in a school, as well as ways to help educators and families transition back to school (after the crisis) while considering physical and psychological health and well-being

Beyond school safety and crisis management planning, NASP's PREPaRE curriculum provides important guidance on crisis response and intervention that can promote adjustment to post-crisis realities. Large-scale crises can present significant coping challenges for children. Frightening experiences and extended disruptions to systems and functioning can cause a host of emotional reactions. School-based mental health providers, including school psychologists, can play a critical role in helping reestablish a sense of normalcy and stability during a time of crisis and uncertainty. In order to help prevent and mitigate psychological trauma, trained school psychologists will need to be directly, or indirectly, involved in the following:

*Primary Crisis Intervention:* Provided to all students who are judged to have some risk of psychological trauma, and depending on the nature of the crisis, can include an entire school.

- Prevent psychological trauma
- Reaffirm physical safety and perceptions of security
- Evaluate psychological trauma
- Reestablish social supports
- Provide developmentally appropriate information to increase understanding and decrease rumors or misconceptions (psychoeducation)
- Virtual caregiver meetings
- Virtual classroom meetings

*Secondary Crisis Intervention:* Provided to those who are moderately to severely traumatized following highly traumatic crises (can include an entire school)

- Student psychoeducational groups
- Stabilization
- Group Crisis Interventions
- Individual Crisis Intervention
- Psychological Interventions

*Indicated (Referral) Crisis Intervention:* Provided to those who are severely traumatized. Typically, a minority of crisis survivors; however, depending upon the nature of the crisis can include a significant percentage.

- When basic problem-solving assistance is insufficient, and a student or adult is deemed to be severely at-risk due to their physical and/or emotional closeness to trauma, internal and external vulnerabilities, immediate reactions during crisis, or ongoing reactions or poor coping, they may need to be referred for mental health services beyond school-based providers (i.e., Psychotherapy).

## Conclusion

Included above are some of the many ways that school psychologists can make a difference in the lives of students, families, educators, and communities during this crisis. The Michigan Association of School Psychologists advocates for practitioners to use the full range of their training as outlined in the Comprehensive Practice Model (2015) and NASP PREPaRE curriculum (or other crisis response training). During this time of crisis, mental health and wellness is at the forefront. The Michigan Association of School Psychologists is an excellent resource for practitioners, schools, and ISDs to help promote comprehensive services and best practices in the state of Michigan.

## Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Daily Life & Coping: Stress and Coping*. Department of Health and Human Services.

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