

Considerations for Fostering an Antiracist and Equitable Healthcare Environment

Case Study 2

Jordan, a 16-year-old adolescent patient whom you've seen since childhood, is meeting with you for a telehealth visit. When you ask how school is going, Jordan's demeanor changes and he states that school isn't going well, and he thinks that it is pointless. As you ask probing questions, you find out that the students organized some peaceful protests last month in response to racism in their communities and at school. In response to the peaceful protests, the school increased the amount of police and security guards that were at the school during those periods. On one of the days, Jordan was running across campus to make it to class. One of the campus police officers stopped him and insisted on searching his bag even though he had done nothing wrong. He thinks the only reason he was stopped and searched was because he is a Black student. Jordan describes being afraid in that moment and since then he has seen that same campus police officer many times on his route to class. A couple of times since then, Jordan has skipped that class all together to avoid running into the officer. Jordan also states that he overheard some of the staff at school debating whether they should have to teach critical race theory or not, which he has also heard debate of on the news and at home.

1. How can you respectfully explore the impacts of racism on Jordan's mental health?

As stated in the AAP policy statement "The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health", "assess patients who report experiencing racism for mental health conditions, including signs of posttraumatic stress, anxiety, grief, and depressive symptoms, using validated screening tools and a trauma-informed approach to make referrals to mental health services as needed."¹

After learning more about what Jordan has been experiencing at school, consider sharing with Jordan that the racism he is experiencing may be impacting his mental wellness. Let Jordan know that you'd like to ask him a few questions to understand how best to support him and his mental health in this challenging situation.

If mental health concerns are identified through the screening process, and the concerns are mild/moderate, consider scheduling follow-up appointments with Jordan via telehealth to further explore and manage these concerns. If the concerns are more severe, telehealth could be leveraged to facilitate referral to a mental health professional, and care coordination within the medical home. Let Jordan know that you'd like to connect him to additional professionals and how they might address some of the concerns.

2. How will you assess Jordan's network to seek support around these circumstances?

It will be important to discuss this with Jordan and his family/caregivers. Often parents will want to take the lead on discussions with their child's school, but you can offer your support and be sure to follow-up regarding what specific actions the school is taking to address Jordan's experience. The [AAP Council on School Health provides resources](#) to help pediatric clinicians

engage and interact with their school system and provides guidelines around the role of school physicians and school health personnel.

3. How else can you support Jordan in following up on these incidents?

According to “The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health”, some suggestions include integrating positive youth development approaches, including racial socialization, to identify strengths and assess youth and families for protective factors, such as a supportive extended family network, that can help mitigate exposure to racist behaviors.

Let Jordan know that you'd like to continue this dialogue in future appointments. Encourage role playing scenarios with Jordan and family members to build healthy reflexes on racialized encounters.