

Advancing Systems of Services Network Café Notes
**COVID-19 and the Behavioral Health and
Well-Being of the Title V Workforce**

September 18, 2020

Key Discussion Questions

1. How is Title V supporting care coordinators in addressing staff behavioral health?
2. Where are you turning for resources in supporting staff?
3. In what ways are care coordinators' roles changing or expanding in response to COVID-19 and responding to behavioral/mental health needs?
 - a. Has the Title V system made any new partnerships or changes in response to these changes?
 - b. Are care coordinators doing more screening/referrals for behavioral health/social determinants of health?
4. Are there systems changes or partnership needs you've had to address in order to support them in this changing role?

Virginia Title V CYSHCN Efforts

- Marcus Allen, Program Director of the Virginia (VA) Department of Health's Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program, offered several reflections and strategies regarding this important topic.
- Staff were encouraged to telework, especially those at high risk. Laptops were made available, as needed, and ongoing efforts are being made to expand this availability.
- The Title V Director sent emails to staff and contractors not to be ashamed of having the "COVID blues" and encouraged them to reach out to the state's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for support. A free call with the EAP is available to staff regardless of whether they are insured as a state employee.
- The frequency of leadership calls has increased for Care Connection for Children, VA's statewide network of centers of excellence for CYSHCN, and for the Child Development Clinic Program. On these calls, a deliberate effort is made to check in with how everyone is doing mentally.
- Three of the Title V-funded children's hospitals are using an assessment and referral approach, called Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK), developed by the University of Maryland (see resources). The SEEK Parent Questionnaire-R (PQ-R) screens for psychosocial problems such as depression, domestic violence, food insecurity, and substance use. In explaining SEEK, Marcus mentioned that the questionnaire is often best given by someone with a trusting relationship with the family who can then work with the family to address any issues identified in the questionnaire.

Colorado Title V CYSHCN Efforts

- Tara Entwistle, HCP Consultant for Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, spoke about her approach to support the HCP care coordination program staff.
- As a regular practice even before the pandemic, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment organizes a monthly statewide meeting that brings together local teams via zoom to share programmatic updates and foster connections between teams in counties throughout the state. Tara's role is to plan and facilitate these meetings. During the pandemic, the meetings have continued and offer opportunities for shared learning.
- In March 2020, the meeting focused on self-care, with a facilitated discussion that was guided by the following questions and breakout session prompt:

Questions

1. What self-care practices work for you?
2. How do you recognize when you need more self-care?
3. What is preventing you from practicing self-care?

Breakout session prompt

In your groups, please brainstorm how you plan to be more intentional and make time for self-care moving forward.

- During the March 2020 statewide meeting, team members reflected on:
 - lessons learned while supporting families through COVID-19
 - challenges and successes (e.g., obtaining consent to work with families remotely)
 - self-care for team members
- Topics covered during the meeting included:
 - definitions of self-care and resiliency
 - proactive and reactive self-care
 - coping with feelings of isolation
- Since this meeting, leadership now beings group meetings with a check-in on how team members are meeting self-care goals.

Strategies for Encouraging Behavioral Health and Well-Being

- Encourage use of EAP benefits by employee as well as children and spouses (if covered by the institution or organization).
- Consider inviting an EAP counselor to a staff meeting to provide education about EAP benefits and how to access them.
- In communications with staff and team members, acknowledge these challenging times and the new and difficult demands placed on staff and others, including future planning. Share available mental health resources.
- One state has partnered with a non-profit (established by former NFL player Brandon Marshall) to offer a one-week retreat for employees who are seeking mental health support and a safe place to address their needs and concerns. Employees do not have to use personal work leave to go on the retreat.
- Take intentional time to be social and connect with one another, including one-on-one time. Be creative with celebrations. Some examples are:
 - Online zoom games such as Bingo and Pictionary
 - Pet happy hour, virtual social hours, and weekly morning coffee chats
 - Virtual celebrations for special occasions (e.g., birthday, retirement)
 - Ice breakers in weekly staff meetings to talk about things unrelated to work
- Normalize mental health needs.
- Consider the concept of community care – support one another as a community.

Resources Shared

- Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK): <https://seekwellbeing.org/the-seek-model/>. Contact Marcus Allen at marcus.allen@vdh.virginia.gov for more information.
- The AAP's Screening, Technical Assistance and Resource Center has additional psychosocial screeners that might be useful for directors: <https://screeningtime.org/star-center/#/screening-tools>
- Create a virtual card for special occasions at <https://www.kudoboard.com/>