



Happy- Mental and Behavioral Wellness

Strategic Area Results:

- All relationships within our community will be physically, intellectually, and emotionally safe for children and adults.

Why is this Important:

- Good mental health allows children to think clearly, develop socially and learn new skills.
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/every-child-needs>
- Mental health is just as important as physical health to a child's well being, www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com
- Early responsive and consistent relationships from caregivers support the development of healthy social-emotional skills, which become the foundation of a young child's mental health.
- Mental and behavioral health affects everyone in contact with the child (i.e. child, family, classmates, staff/teachers, community, etc.).
- "It takes a village" - Everyone needs to be educated and made aware of the importance of mental health.
- Chronic stress and trauma impact mental and physical health.

What works:

- All children are in safe environments.
- All children have at least one secure attachment figure in their home.
- All children have at least one meaningful relationship in their learning environment and within their community.
- All children are given opportunities to learn and practice social-emotional skills in supportive environments.
- Children with lagging skills or chronic stress are provided instruction and support through effective plans and/or treatment programs as early as possible.

Current Conditions:

- Increase in children with underdeveloped social-emotional skills (school staff and community programs report).
- Increased need for mental health support (school staff and community programs report).
- Lack of awareness and understanding around conditions such as autism, ADHD, and anxiety.
- Complex stressors such as domestic violence, child sexual abuse, substance abuse, and mental health issues impact behavior for some children in our community.

Strategies:

- Create and participate in dialogue and training to build coherence and alignment in practice across individuals in families, early care and education settings, the school district, and the community.
- Build safe and nurturing environments for young children.
- Foster strong relationships in the home, school, and community.
- Empower caregivers and teachers with the latest knowledge and tools to promote social-emotional skills for adults and children.
- Deepen the understanding of the role of chronic stress and trauma in child development.
- Improve access to behavioral health and mental health supports when needed.
- Deepen the understanding of conditions such as autism, ADHD, and anxiety/depression.
- Promote the 40 Developmental Assets in children and families.

Selected Actions:

- Explore Mental/Behavioral Health Data from schools and community
- Offer Mental Health First Aid Program either live or online
- Explore SDE's Primary Mental Health Grant for Colchester Public Schools
- Promote access to & awareness of existing Mental/Behavioral Health Programs
- Work with Youth and Social for mental health promotion through their Suicide Prevention Grant
- Co-host additional screenings of the documentary Resilience
- Provide professional development that promotes social-emotional skills
- Identify early identification processes including hospital screening programs, physician's visits, etc.
- Provide Mindfulness program(s)
- Explore the 40 Developmental Assets and assess organizational priorities for implementation