COVID-19’s Impact on Children

Gary Blau, PhD. | August 4, 2020
Vision, Mission, Core Change Strategy:
“Putting Policy Into Practice”

The Hackett Center for Mental Health, established in 2018, is the first regional center of The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

Vision
We envision Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

Mission Statement
To provide independent, non-partisan, data-driven, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.
COVID-19’S EFFECT ON CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH
What is Trauma?

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by a person as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting adverse effects on the person’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Underlying Question

“What happened to you?”

Symptoms

Adaptations to traumatic events

Healing Happens

In relationships
Three E’s in Trauma

**Events**

*Events or circumstances cause trauma*

**Experience**

*An individual’s experience of the event determines whether it is traumatic*

**Effects**

*Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences*
## Signs of Trauma Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Emotional/Physical</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Blowing up</td>
<td>• Nightmares or sleeping problems</td>
<td>• Confusing what is safe and what is dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fighting</td>
<td>• Sensitive to noise or to being touched</td>
<td>• Trouble focusing or concentrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resisting transitions or change</td>
<td>• Fear of being separated from family</td>
<td>• Difficulty imagining the future</td>
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<td>• Very protective of personal space</td>
<td>• Difficulty trusting others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reckless or self-destructive behavior</td>
<td>• Feeling very sad, angry, afraid</td>
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<td>• Frequently seeking attention</td>
<td>• Emotional swings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reverting to younger behaviors</td>
<td>• Unexplained medical problems</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

The study examined health outcomes of over 17,000 Kaiser members in relation to events in their childhood.

Adults who reported **multiple adverse experiences** in childhood were much **more likely** to suffer a range of **negative mental health, health and social outcomes in adulthood**, including heart disease, lung disease, and suicide.
Effects of COVID-19 on Children

Short-Term Effects

• Feelings of isolation, irritability, anxiety, insomnia
• Education and nutrition losses
• “Crisis schooling” stress at home for parents and children
• Lack of access to school-based mental health services
• Decrease in reported child abuse cases
• “Pent up demand” when schools reopen

Long-Term Effects

• Trauma-related mental health diagnoses
• Widening education gap
• Increased child poverty
ACEs affect: All children and youth, and are more prevalent for children of color, children living in poverty, families with lower education / less employment, and LGBT status.
Policy Options

• Capacity and Access: Telehealth
• Physical and Mental Health Care Integration: Collaborative Care
• Evidence-Based Practices
• Measurement Based Care
• Health Equity
The truth is: mental illness affects more people than you may think, and we need to talk about it. It’s Okay to Say…” okaytosay.org