



## Newsletter • AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2020

### Memorialization

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Memorial Committee, meets monthly. For more information please visit <https://www.broward.org/Commission/Pages/SunshineMeetings.aspx>

### Help Starts Here – MSD Wellness Center Continues its Mission to Care



### **Q:** How is the MSD Wellness Center adapting to COVID-19?

When the COVID-19 pandemic erupted and Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) adopted a distanced learning protocol, the center adapted. Staff pivoted to a telehealth model, using Microsoft Teams video conferencing software, which is HIPAA and FERPA compliant. A dedicated email was established for the Wellness Center (MSD\_Wellness@browardschools.com), so students could reach out directly for help. The email is monitored constantly to ensure a swift response.

Making the switch involved extensive training for the center's school family therapists and social workers. Telehealth requires a different skill set than traditional mental health counseling, so the center's staff underwent an intensive 16-hour training, through the Professional Education Systems Institute, on best practices for delivering effective mental health interventions at a distance.

### **Q:** How is the Wellness Center responding to requests for help?

Some students made the transition easily; others, as expected, found the change more difficult. An uptick in referrals occurred from teachers for students they felt might not be coping well with the isolation associated with distanced learning. Since distanced learning has been in use, the center has managed more than 800 interventions. According to Dr. Jhonii P. Louis, supervisor of the School Social Work Program and Social Work supervisor of the Wellness Center, staff continues to help students manage many of the common mental health issues associated with maturing into a teenager and young adult.

"Students look for our help with academic issues, anxiety, depression, stress, relationship conflicts with friends and family members. These are fairly typical," Dr. Louis said. "While we are always prepared for this, we are also seeing students approaching the center now with post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) from the tragedy. Often, PTSD shows up months and years after the event, so we are ready to respond and help those students deal with managing their complex feelings."

**Q: What changes does the Wellness Center expect now that ‘brick and mortar’ buildings are no longer the hub for its services?**

While it has not been confirmed when, if, or how BCPS students will return to more traditional in-classroom learning, the center’s mission is unchanged. It will continue to meet the needs of students by being innovative and adaptable in its approach and sensitive to students’ changing experiences.

“What we do know is that this pandemic is inescapable,” said Dr. Louis. “While we’re not sure exactly what to expect, we can anticipate normal responses after a tumultuous event, like the COVID-19 outbreak. We know our students have experienced loss—not only of loved ones to the disease itself, but the loss of some of life’s milestones like proms, graduations, birthday gatherings, etc. A lot of traditional experiences young people look forward to and enjoy have been taken away from them; there can be grief associated with that loss, and we want to help our students work through all that.”

Students can connect with the Wellness Center directly at [MSD\\_Wellness@browardschools.com](mailto:MSD_Wellness@browardschools.com)



**For BCPS Students, Help Is Just a Click Away**

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) was recently featured on WLRN/NPR radio, sharing how students can directly access mental health care help through the same portal they use for class attendance. The article shared:

Providing mental health care to students is more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Broward’s new school year started virtually August 19, 2020.

Marisa Kinney, supervisor of School Social Work Services is BCPS’ Student Services Department said the same online platforms the district uses for teaching students — Clever and Microsoft Teams — will come in handy for helping students in crisis.

“There will be a quick document [in which] the student will list their name, their school, and also there will be checkboxes depending on what needs they have,” Kinney said. “There are links and immediate notification buttons, so that students can even themselves click to get immediate support.”

She said a student who needs help right away would be routed a 24/7 emergency hotline. For the full article, visit: <https://www.wlrn.org/2020-08-25/new-mental-health-crisis-teams-aim-to-limit-suspensions-baker-acts-in-broward-schools>



## Online Mental Health Resources

### How to Manage Sibling Rivalry

If you have more than one child, chances are good to excellent that you've had to referee sibling fighting and rivalry.

Even the best sibling relationships can have their moments of conflict and friction. Sibling bickering can be very challenging and stressful for parents and caregivers to manage.

In this FREE Online Workshop, you will learn about:

- ▶ Parenting Overview and Parenting Styles
- ▶ Factors that Influence Sibling Rivalry
- ▶ Main Causes of Sibling Rivalry
- ▶ Strategies to Manage Sibling Rivalry
- ▶ What to Do When Fighting Starts
- ▶ Helping Siblings Get Along
- ▶ Strategies for Conflict Resolution
- ▶ About Sibling Rivalry



<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07eh6couzu5f158315&llr=gh8ueflab>

# ZERO Suicide Broward



Please join the Broward Suicide Prevention Coalition  
as we launch a new Countywide initiative,

## Zero Suicide Broward

All Broward County stakeholders are invited to participate!  
Join us to learn more about the Zero Suicide Framework and the need for  
a system-wide movement in Broward County.

**Thursday, Sept. 10th, 2020**  
**9:30 am—10:30 am**

**This free event is open to all. Please register at:**

<http://bit.ly/ZeroSuicideBroward>

To Learn more about Zero Suicide, please visit:

<https://zerosuicide.edc.org/>.

*Questions? Contact Lois Simpson at [lsimpson@unitedwaybroward.org](mailto:lsimpson@unitedwaybroward.org)*

[browardschools.com/recovery](http://browardschools.com/recovery)

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