

## Addressing the Student Mental Health Crisis With Science-based Solutions from The Pittsburgh Study

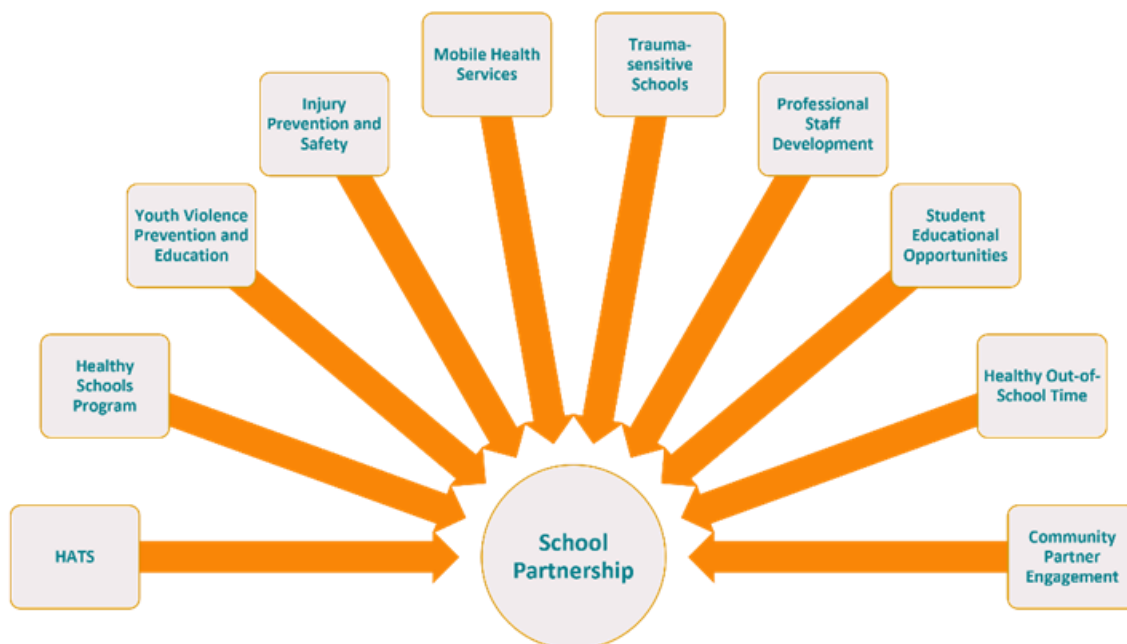
It has been barely a year since the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children’s Hospital Association, declared a national state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health. Findings from a recent poll by the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics documents the crisis from the youth perspective. During interviews with young adults, greater than 70% stated that they believe there is a mental health crisis in our country. Furthermore, 26% of participants reported that they know someone who has died by suicide and approximately 25% of those young people reported having attempted suicide themselves.<sup>2</sup>

The Pittsburgh Study and its partners are documenting success through application of a healing justice framework.

The Pittsburgh Study integrates promising practices across the developmental life course from early childhood through adolescence, bringing child and adolescent health experts and an expansive network of community partners all working together to improve educational and health outcomes, reduce disparities, and elevate quality of life for our county’s students and their families. This unique, community-centered, collaborative approach brings a focus on racial equity and healing justice to enhance trauma-sensitive practices, focusing on student, family, faculty, staff, administrator, and community partner strengths and strategies to enhance student resiliency and their ability to thrive.

### OUR VISION IS TO REIMAGINE CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SUCCESS IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT EVERY CHILD’S CHANCE TO THRIVE.

Trauma’s impacts on school outcomes include higher absenteeism, lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and increased risk of unhealthy coping behaviors. The Pittsburgh Study and its program interventions are focused on understanding the mechanisms for chronic absenteeism to increase attendance and connectedness to school. A healing justice framework underscores that our children, families, and communities are not broken, and that strategies to enhance resiliency and promote relational healing can be at the core of our approach to the mental health crisis.



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## The Pittsburgh Study offers an opportunity for collective impact through community-centered solutions for students and their families.

### Key Outcomes

- Reducing chronic absenteeism through increased connectedness, social supports
- Improving school connectedness and inclusive school climate
- Strengthening resiliency building with increased socioemotional learning, improved communication and relationships skills, increased connections to peers and adults, increased future orientation (hopefulness for the future)

### Core Program Intervention Components

- Health, Education, and Workforce Development
- Strengthening Connections and Promoting Relational Healing
- Community Partnerships and Parent Engagement
- Promoting Racial Equity and Affirming Inclusive Climates

### Programs

- **Changing Minds** is a national campaign of Futures without Violence (FUTURES) and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) that offers strategies and policy changes for schools to embrace healing centered approaches in the school and classroom environment.
- **Healthy Schools** (from the national Alliance for a Healthier Generation) provides an asset-based assessment of thriving within schools and helps establish school wellness committees and champions. UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh implements this program in collaboration with community partners and school-based behavioral health team at UPMC Western Behavioral Health.
- **The 3Rs**, Reading, Racial Equity & Relationships, focuses on building a love for reading through affirming and inclusive practices with teachers, parents/caregivers, and community members.
- **The Just Discipline Project** helps schools to implement robust relational and restorative climate models to cement a blueprint for equitable discipline practices.
- **Expect Respect** for middle schoolers is a research-informed violence prevention program for developing communication skills, choosing equality and respect, recognizing abuse, and becoming active proponents for safe and healthy relationships.
- **Creating Peace** is a trauma-sensitive curriculum addressing experiences of racism and discrimination among adolescents ages 13-19 to build youth leadership skills.

For more information or to schedule a meeting, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Miller at: [elizabeth.miller@chp.edu](mailto:elizabeth.miller@chp.edu).

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### UPMC CLINICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES School Based Behavioral Health Treatment Programs

UPMC WBH leverages our expertise across our clinical and research services to offer education, training and consultation programs requested by schools. These include topics such as:

- Managing mental health crisis
- Recognizing mental health distress and what to say when a student needs support.
- Trauma informed schools
- Safe use of social media
- Grief and loss
- Safe space classrooms
- Self-Care and where to go for Support.
- Behavioral Health and Student Athletes – Finding the Balance
- Head Start and Pre-K early childhood mental health.

### Connect to Teen Mental Health Resources:

- <https://www.upmc.com/services/behavioral-health/teens-at-risk>
  - <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Disabilities/Mental-Health/Services-For-Persons-Under-18.aspx>
  - Peer Supported Advocacy Network (PSAN) Warmline: 1-866-661-9276
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