Supporting the Social-Emotional Needs of the Students in Elementary Schools

Nationally, 2.8 mil Youth have had a major depressive episode

90% of those who die by suicide suffer from a mental illness

Depression can make a teenager 12x more likely to attempt suicide
80% of teens & 60% of young children who need help are not getting it

70% of youth receiving mental health services receive them at school

Kids are more likely to seek help when counseling is offered at school, especially when it’s free

CASSY partners with over 40 schools in Silicon Valley to ensure our youth have the social and emotional support they need to be successful in school and in life.

**Our Mission**
- To de-stigmatize mental health services and make supporting students’ social and emotional wellbeing the norm in our local schools.
- To provide the support and resources needed for students to succeed.
- To ensure every student has access to the help they need.

**Our Values**
- To be inclusive of all students, regardless of their ability.
- To partner with schools to make mental health services a natural part of the educational process.
- To tailor our programs to meet the unique needs of our students.
- To hire, train, and mentor professional therapists who love working with youth.
- To commit to making a difference.

We envision a world where all students have the continuity of support they need, from the first day of kindergarten until they graduate from high school, to be successful in school and in life.
CASSY in Moreland School District

The CASSY Moreland team has served youth in their local schools this year at 5 Moreland schools through:
- 4,000 hours of onsite counseling services and support
- 1,300 individual and 275 group therapy sessions
- 205 parent consultations
- 650 school staff consultations

Thanks our compassionate team:
- 96% of youth in CASSY services increased psychological, social, and occupational functioning
- 50% resolved their disciplinary concerns
- 90% of students met at least one of their treatment goals

Response to Intervention (RTI) Model
Tier 1 - School Wide Interventions

All students, Classroom lessons, Assemblies, Project Cornerstone - 100% of youth

Tier 1: Classroom Lessons

Provides general social/emotional support

- 2 classroom lessons are presented to all classes by CASSY counselor
- All lessons are completed during the first six weeks of school
- Topics are presented through
  - reading books
  - engaging in an activity
  - discussion about the topic

Letter sent to all parents

On the first day of school, a letter is sent to all of the parents informing them about the classroom lessons. There is no need for the parents to return the letter with consent.

Letter sent to all parents

Dear Parents,

My name is Elizabeth (Betsy) Lovely and I am a school-based counselor that will be working with the students at Latimer School during the 2017-2018 school year. I am excited to be working with such a wonderful group of students, families and teachers. This year, in addition to providing counseling services, I will also be providing classroom lessons to the kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms as an opportunity to promote social and emotional learning and ease the transition to school. Classroom lessons are not a counseling service by itself, but rather an opportunity to promote healthy friendships and engagement in the academic process.

Two classroom lessons, that are 30 minutes in length, will be provided covering topics such as making friends, listening, sharing, kindness, growth mindset, identification of feelings and positive coping. Lessons may include activities such as group discussion, art and story time. I look forward to working with the students and teachers here at Anderson Elementary School. I believe the classroom lessons will be a great opportunity to promote core values.

If you have any questions, concerns, or do not wish for your child to participate, please contact your child’s teacher or the office.

Employed by CASSY (Counseling And Support Services for Youth)
Classroom Lessons

Normalizing mental health and teaching coping strategies to all grade levels

Benefits of Lessons

- INTRODUCTION TO THE CASSY COUNSELOR
- DE-STIGMATIZE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
- PART OF SCHOOL STAFF
- SUPPORT TEACHERS

Classroom Lesson Topics

K-2nd grade classes:
  - Feelings and coping - The Way I Feel by
  - Whole Body Listening - Whole Body Listening Larry at School by

3rd-5th grade classes:
  - Kindness - Each Kindness by
  - Growth mindset - The Dot by
  - Gratitude - Last Stop on Market Street by
Lessons Learned

1. Timeframe
2. Space/School Day
3. Delayed Start of Individual/Intensive Services

Classroom Lesson
K-2nd lesson - Feelings & Coping

Tier 2 - Group Therapy
At-Risk Students - 20% of youth
Tier 2: Groups

**What is a group?**
- 2 or more students
- Focus on a specific behavior or need in common

**Getting started**
1. Referrals - groups form organically
2. Reaching out to teachers
3. Coordinating day and time with all teachers involved

**Benefits**
1. Normalizes Mental Health needs & services
2. Support more students - more kids learn skills
3. Support is on school site with their peer group
4. They can support each other outside of counseling
5. Feedback from peers - social microcosm
6. Can assess a students behaviors in a group setting. It's different than when they are 1:1
7. Teachers who are reluctant to make referrals are more likely to add a student to a Group
8. Triage - can assess for bigger needs and see 1:1

**Things to Consider**
1. Getting parent consent - can take longer to get
2. Room availability - confidential bigger space
3. Parent contact is more sparse
4. If a student does not easily fit into a group or trigger each other (i.e., encourage each other’s negative behaviors)
5. Some kids can get lost in a group setting (i.e., not learn skills as effectively)
6. Note-taking
7. Scheduling a time that works for multiple teachers / classes / students (i.e., Flextime, RSP, Speech, Art, etc)
Topics for Groups

**Social Skill**
- Mild Autism, ADHD, oppositional, shyness, friendship making, “Mean Girls” (conflict resolution), Middle School peer interactions

**Middle School Transitions**
- 5th graders / 8th graders

**Emotional Regulation**
- Trauma/triggers, coping strategies, anger & other big emotions

**Anxiety**
- “Calm Club”: Mindfulness, Yoga, Coping strategies, effects on friendships, managing symptoms

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**Types of Group Processes**

1. Curriculum-based (Zones of Regulation, Happiness Project, Kimochis)
2. Play-based (Social Skills)
   - Factor 1: generalizing - natural way they interact, verbalize thoughts/feelings/needs, negotiating, collaborating, respectful communication
   - Factor 2: pre-decided activities - Limit supplies, teamwork, board games
3. Open-ended (they lead): (trauma triggers, Conflict Resolution)
4. Set number of sessions (social skills)
5. Ongoing (Anxiety - managing symptoms)

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**“Calm Club”**
- Deep breathing
- While listening to The Calm App

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Group Curriculum

Where do you get ideas?
- "104 Activities that build..." - Alanna Jones
- "Adventures in Peacemaking" - William J. Kreidler & Lisa Furlong

Mindfulness books:
- "Peaceful Piggy Meditation" / "How to sit like a frog" /
- "The Kids' Yoga Deck"

American Girl books on friendship:
- "Drama, Rumors & Secrets" / "A smart girl's guide to liking herself - even on bad days" / "Friends"

Connection to home and class

1. Collaboration with teacher
   a. Scheduling time / day
   b. Progress, behaviors & needs in class, skills to try in class

2. Collaboration with parents / guardians
   a. Letter: Beginning - Intro to group
   b. Letter: End - Summarize skills learned and how the group interacted (generally) - what they can try at home to support their kiddo

Group Lesson

(if there's time)
Individual Therapy - Tier 3

**Referral Process**

1. Teacher or staff member makes initial contact with parent(s) about the concern or behavior that they have noticed in the classroom or at school. Teacher informs parent(s) about the availability of CASSY services (school-based counseling) at school and introduces the idea of the student receiving CASSY services.

2. Teacher or staff member completes the CASSY counseling referral form found in the CASSY mailbox and returns it to the CASSY mailbox.

3. Using the referral form, the CASSY therapist follows-up with parent(s) to schedule an intake/assessment and consent meeting.

**Assessment/Intake and Consent**

- Therapist schedules an initial phone or in-person meeting with parent(s) to obtain consent, gather background information/assessment, review confidentiality, explain school-based services, and answer questions.

- All minors are required to have a parent or legal guardian sign a consent form to obtain medical or counseling services.

- Therapists MUST have a signed consent form completed by the parents PRIOR to the start of therapy. CASSY counselors are unable to speak with students privately for any reason without a signed consent form for children under the age of 12.
Individual Therapy - Tier 3

Logistics: Collaboration, Format, Scheduling
- CASSY therapist works in collaboration with student’s teacher to gather additional information about the reason for referral and also to arrange a day/time to meet with the student.
- Short-term model: usually between 8 to 14 sessions (30 minutes each). Therapists reassess around session 12-14 to determine next steps. Having a time-limited duration ensures that the number of students served throughout the year can be maximized.
- If the student has completed all of the available CASSY sessions but hasn’t resolved all of his or her treatment goals, the therapist will discuss the concerns with parent(s) and either continue with school-based services (if appropriate) or provide referrals for community-based counseling.
- If the CASSY counselor schedule is full, the student will be placed on a wait-list.

Types of school-based concerns to refer for therapy
- Students who may be struggling with:
  - Anxiety
  - Depressed Mood
  - Withdrawn behavior
  - Aggressive behaviors
  - Anger
  - Trauma
  - Loss
  - Social Skills/Friendships
- In addition, students may also have counseling as indicated in their IEP.

How it works
- School-based therapy can utilize a variety of treatment modalities, including:
  - Skill building
  - Teaching coping skills
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Talk therapy, emotional processing
  - Art therapy
  - Play therapy (sandtray, games, etc)
  - Utilizing social-emotional strategies (e.g. Zones of Regulation)
Individual Therapy - Tier 3

**Bridge between therapy and classroom**

- School-based therapy supports the connection between the individual student and the classroom by processing concerns, working on skill building, developing coping tools with students, and collaborating with teachers, as appropriate, to reinforce what is covered in therapy and extend it into the classroom setting.

- School-based therapists also support staff by communicating and working with parents to reinforce what is covered in therapy, providing referrals to outside providers, and identifying the need for additional services (e.g. evaluation/assessment).

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Warm Handoff - Take a photo for later!

You can find example materials for you to start with here:

https://tinyurl.com/cassy-materials

Ask us questions + tell us how you’re using classroom lessons, groups, and counseling to ensure success at school and in life

Rosalyn Schreiman, LCSW, Moreland Site Coordinator - rosalyn@cassybayarea.org

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