

Community-School Collaboration to Address Opioid-Related Trauma

More than 170,000 children in the Appalachian region are experiencing a range of stressors and trauma related to parental opioid use, such as losing a parent to an opioid-related death, having a parent incarcerated due to opioid use, or being removed from their homes due to an opioid-related issue.ⁱ Teachers and other school-based staff are well-positioned to address some of these traumas—but they can't do so alone. Rather, by collaborating with other sectors in the community, school staff can increase their capacity and resources and contribute to positive impacts on a range of student outcomes.ⁱⁱ This document provides information for school and community stakeholders to make the case for school-community collaborations and guide collaborative efforts.

Why Collaborate?

Collaborating with community organizations provides school staff with:

- Increased referral opportunities to provide needed services and supports to students.
- Access to more data to better understand the impact of the opioid crisis on students' functioning and well-being.
- Access to out-of-school providers (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, The Y/YMCA) that can provide social-emotional and interpersonal/peer supports for students beyond the school day.

Keys to Effective Collaboration

For effective collaboration, the following elements should be negotiated, built, and maintained:ⁱⁱⁱ

- ✓ Shared purpose and objectives for collaboration
- ✓ Transparency and trust
- ✓ Clear expectations and mutual benefits of collaboration
- ✓ Complementary resources and services

Steps to Building Collaboration

Step 1: Identify possible partners. Which community-based organizations can best provide supports to address your students' and/or staff's needs?

Step 2: Build your pitch. Your pitch should include a brief description of who you are, how you support or plan to support students impacted by trauma, what you envision the collaboration looking like, and what benefits the potential collaborators may receive from collaboration.

Step 3: Network. Do you know anyone in the possible collaborating organization? Do you know someone who knows someone? While it is always possible to reach out to a possible collaborator directly and without a pre-existing connection, it is more effective to reach out through your network.

Step 4: Develop a collaboration plan. What will the collaboration look like? What are the objectives of the collaboration? How will you divide responsibilities? How will you ensure effective communication?




Stages of Collaboration




Building a strong collaboration between schools and community-based organizations takes time. In fact, there are often multiple steps that partners need to take to develop a trusting and effective collaboration. The table below presents the typical stages to developing a strong collaboration.^{iv, v}

Stages of Collaboration	What It Sounds Like
No Involvement	“You’ll do your thing and we will do ours.”
Networking	“Let’s talk and share information.”
Cooperation	“I’ll support your program, and you will support mine.”
Coordination	“Let’s plan an event together.”
Full Collaboration	“Let’s work together on a comprehensive plan to address the issue with a common purpose and objective.”

Who to Collaborate With?

Below is a list of some types of organizations and entities that school staff may want to consider partnering with in their efforts to support students impacted by opioid-related trauma.

Type of Organization or Agency	What They Provide to Schools	Examples
Mental health clinics 	While school-based mental health providers may offer services onsite, these professionals often have large, overwhelming caseloads. Through collaborations with local mental health providers, school clinicians can meet the needs of their students through referrals to local services and even work with other local clinicians to see students onsite at school.	School and mental health partnerships in New York State
Youth-serving organizations 	Youth-serving organizations like YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs may offer trauma-informed programs and train their staff on such approaches. By partnering with these types of organizations, school staff can refer students to programs that support trauma-exposed youth when they are outside of school, especially during the hours that parents or caregivers may not be home to supervise them.	Trauma-informed afterschool programs in Wisconsin
Substance use disorder (SUD) treatment facilities 	Substance use disorder (SUD) treatment facilities may offer programs designed not only to support individuals with SUDs, but also their families. By supporting the whole family, treatment facility programming can provide the support children and youth need when a parent or other loved one is struggling with an SUD, including an opioid use disorder.	Strengthening Families Program available for treatment facilities to support families

Type of Organization or Agency	What They Provide to Schools	Examples
<p>Health care centers</p> 	<p>Hospitals, community health centers, and school-based health centers can augment access to mental health and trauma-related health services for children and youth. In addition, these entities may have training programs for educators and other professionals related to identifying and addressing trauma symptoms. Hospitals may also provide community-level data to schools about the impact of the opioid epidemic on communities, which enables schools to better plan for trauma supports.</p>	<p>Massachusetts schools and community health collaboration</p>
<p>Community-based coalitions</p> 	<p>Community-based coalitions, such as substance misuse prevention coalitions, suicide prevention coalitions, and/or broader youth empowerment coalitions, bring together stakeholders to tackle common challenges. These coalitions usually include health departments, schools, law enforcement, faith-based groups, and others. By joining such a coalition, schools can join forces to combat the consequences of trauma among children and youth.</p>	<p>Trauma-responsive community coalition operating in Erie County, Ohio</p>
<p>First Responders</p> 	<p>In many communities, law enforcement officers and other first responders are at the forefront of the opioid crisis, attending to overdose victims and providing support to people with opioid use disorders through their journey into treatment and recovery. Through formal partnerships, schools and first responders can work together to support students who may have been at the scene of traumatic or violent events.</p>	<p>West Virginia's Handle with Care program model of collaboration with law enforcement</p>

ⁱ Brundage, S. C., Fifield, A., & Partridge, L. (2019). *The ripple effect: National and state estimates of the U.S. opioid epidemic's impact on children*. United Hospital Fund. https://uhfnyc.org/media/filer_public/6e/80/6e80760f-d579-46a3-998d-1aa816ab06f6/uhf_ripple_effect_national_and_state_estimates_chartbook.pdf

ⁱⁱ Anderson, J., Houser, J., & Howland, A. (2010). The Full Purpose Partnership model for promoting academic and socio-emotional success in schools. *School Community Journal*, 20(1), 31–53. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Rubin, H. (2009). *Collaborative leadership: Developing effective partnerships for communities and schools*. Corwin Press.

^{iv} Prevention Solutions (2020). *Prevention collaboration in action: Understanding the basics*. Education Development Center. <https://pscollaboration.edc.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Levels-of-Collaboration-508-Compliant.pdf>

^v Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), 383–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214006290356>