



CLARK COUNTY CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Clark County Schools Need to Prioritize the Mental Health of Students TODAY.

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The members of the Clark County Children's Mental Health Consortium are very concerned about the well-being of the students and families in the district and are advocating for the Clark County School Board to prioritize methods that will provide additional supports to families.

Our state does not prioritize the mental health and well-being of our children. The newest report from Mental Health America, for the third year in a row, ranks Nevada 51st in the nation in children's mental health overall. The report shows that youth in need are not accessing services and there is a shortage of mental health providers.

Before the pandemic, the rate of suicide for Nevada youth under the age of 25 spiked in 2018 and 2019, with 2019 yielding the highest rate of 21.2 deaths per 100,000 population. In 2020, as we all struggle to cope with the ongoing pandemic, some youth, unfortunately, took their own lives.

It is our responsibility to protect and support the children in our community, and we need to ensure that the mental health of youth is a priority. This must be reflected in all CCSD schools.

The CCCMHC has received testimony from parents and mental health professionals in the community that the methods some schools are using for student accountability are negatively impacting students. We have received reports that students are experiencing threats of punitive consequences in the online environment. Children who are nervous or anxious using a virtual platform are being called out in class, further intensifying their fears. Students are being threatened that they will fail classes or will be held back due to their academic struggles. Further, students are being threatened with removal from their magnet schools or not being withdrawn from electives such as art or music if they don't maintain a certain grade level. Unfortunately, we even have had a report that a youth, that prior to the pandemic was an A/B student, has been admitted to a mental health facility due to the stress of being told they may have to repeat the year because their grades were now Ds and Fs.

Allison Stephens, parent of two children enrolled in CCSD, stated "Schools are unwilling to adjust expectations appropriately in the middle of a global health and economic crisis. Why can't schools be creative, collaborative, and flexible with children and parents? I am one of many

parents worried about the excessive workloads and threats of punitive action putting my children's mental health at greater risk in an already challenging time.”

During this time when stress is high for everyone, including the teachers, it seems that above all else compassion and understanding is needed so students and families feel supported rather than punished for this situation that is not within their control. This transition has been hard on families, and many students are being punished for struggling. The threat of failing grades and/or being held back a year is causing significant stress that can and has led to students being hospitalized. The following are three strategies that can be implemented to support youth and their families.

- Additional support should be given to teachers to be able to recognize when students are struggling and know how to connect families to resources such as mobile crisis.
- Improved and consistent policies are needed regarding workload, homework submission, and attendance
- Consider not failing students in the fall semester and extend their ability to pass classes in the spring and summer of 2021. This is a strategy being implemented in several parts of the country to avoid penalizing students who have been experiencing extreme stress during the pandemic.

Administrators and teachers need to consider examining the feasibility of the workload given to students, implement positive behavior supports, and understand that online learning is not for everyone – and that students have no choice right now but learn to survive in this new environment. Now, more than ever, their leadership and compassion are needed to address youth mental health.

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The Clark County Children's Mental Health Consortium has been a part of the community since 2001 and brings professionals and parents together from a variety of disciplines and organizations to focus on bettering the services and resources for children's mental health in Clark County, NV. The Consortium was created by the passage of Assembly Bill 1 of the 2001 Special Session of the Nevada Legislature to study the mental health needs of all children in Clark County and to develop recommendations for service delivery reform.