A message from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

May 2020

This Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) newsletter periodically shares updates and offerings related to holistic supports & enrichment, including efforts to help strengthen social emotional competencies, health & safety. This edition is the second one released during school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and we hope everyone is doing as well as possible while navigating the many challenges. Please see below for a sampling of DESE offerings and other information designed to help bolster efforts to support student, staff, and family well-being and safety, alongside implementation of new modes of teaching and learning. Feedback, suggestions, or questions may be sent to achievement@doe.mass.edu.

Thank you for all you are doing to support students, families, and staff, and to take care of yourselves.

MAY 2020 CONTENTS

1. Peer Sharing Calls for School Mental Health
2. Massachusetts Preschool Remote Learning Guidance
3. Information for Families
4. Safe Schools for LGBTQ Youth Webinars and Resources
5. Massachusetts Tools for Schools
6. Network of Care
7. LINK-KID
8. Office of Youth & Young Adult Services Out of School Resource Guide
9. Supporting Immigrants Families, Reducing Stress, and Healthy Coping During COVID-19
10. Talking to Kids about COVID-19

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Supporting the Social and Emotional Health of Students and Families in the Era of COVID-19

To highlight the work of school mental health personnel and provide a forum to begin thinking about the future, DESE, in partnership with Education Development Center, Transforming Education, and Walker, is hosting a series of hour-long peer sharing calls. During these interactive sessions, school mental health staff will have an opportunity to share strategies and lessons learned over the past two months and explore potential needs schools will have to address when they reopen.

**Audience:** School mental health staff from Massachusetts school districts

- **Monday, May 18, 12 pm – 1 pm:** Continuing Targeted Mental Health Supports (Tiers 2 and 3) During School Closures and Upon Return ([Register here](#))
- **Monday, June 1, 12 pm – 1 pm:** Fostering Social and Emotional Health at Home: Strategies for Supporting Families ([Register here](#))

Contact SELMHAcademy@edc.org if you have any questions.

### Massachusetts Preschool Remote Learning Guidance

DESE’s Early Learning Team has created a [Preschool Remote Learning Guide](#) for use during the COVID-19 school building closures. It features background information about teaching remotely as well as prerequisite content standards for all content areas of the MA curriculum frameworks, including the Preschool and Kindergarten Social and Emotional Learning and Approached to Play and Learning Standards. This guide is a companion to the elementary and secondary guides and will soon be posted to the DESE Learning at Home page.

### Information for Families

A [letter](#) to families was sent from the Commissioner to districts on May 8th and is now posted to the DESE COVID-19 web page. This letter includes updated information about remote learning expectations and how to find help with essential needs. The letter and translated versions will also soon be added to the family letters and learning at home web pages.

### Safe Schools for LGBTQ Youth Webinars and Resources

Upcoming professional development webinars include [Responding to Harmful Language](#), and [Ensuring Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for LGBTQ Students](#). Some past webinars are recorded and can be found on the [webinar page](#). These have been developed...
and shared by the Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, administered by the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth with support from the DESE. They are free and open for anyone to register, using Zoom video conferencing, and some are available on-demand. The Safe Schools Program is also accepting requests for school and district-specific remote trainings for May and June. An educator resource page has also been developed which includes resources referenced in many of the offered trainings.

Massachusetts Tools for Schools

As a reminder, MA Tools for Schools (https://matoolsforschools.com/) is a clearinghouse of resources to support sustainable school improvement in Massachusetts. The MA Tools for Schools COVID-19 Resources page contains links to local and national resources for implementing multi-tiered systems of supports during this time, including slides and links mentioned on recent webinars offered by DESE and its partners Education Development Center (EDC), Transforming Education, and Walker Cares. These include information from the “Supporting Students’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health Needs in the COVID-19 Era Webinar” held on March 31 and April 9, and the “Establishing District-Wide Systems to Support the Mental Health Needs of Students and Educators during COVID-19 Webinar” held on April 17 and 24.

Network of Care

The Network of Care, Massachusetts updated website managed by the MA Association for Mental Health contains links to information about resources across the Commonwealth for children and adults with mental health and substance use needs.

LINK-KID

The Child Trauma Training Center has established a toll-free number (1-855-LINK-KID) for families and the community to streamline the link between children in need of evidence-based trauma treatment and mental health providers who have been trained in these treatments. LINK-KID has a large network of providers across the state who have been trained in trauma-focused EBTs. The primary goal of LINK-KID is to help youth receive quality treatment for trauma as soon as possible, and decrease wait times while providing support. LINK-KID maintains an active database of providers across the state trained in trauma-focused EBTs, including information about waitlists, language capacity, and insurances accepted. More information about LINK-KID can be found here: https://www.umassmed.edu/cttc/cttc-services/link-kid/.

Office of Youth & Young Adult Services Out of School Resource Guide

The Department of Public Health’s Office of Youth & Young Adult Services (OYYAS) has created a new website with a collection of youth and family resources for mental health &
Supporting Immigrants Families, Reducing Stress, and Healthy Coping During COVID-19

Mira Coalition: This page includes public health resources in multiple languages for immigrant and refugee families; relevant information on immigration policy and enforcement.


Movimiento Cosecha is organizing immigrants and allies to support the undocumented community throughout the pandemic.

NAMI Connection is a free support group for people living with a mental health condition.

Talking to Kids about COVID-19

Dr. Chandra Ghosh Ippen in collaboration with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) developed the story: TRINKA AND SAM FIGHTING THE BIG VIRUS: TRINKA, SAM, AND LITTLETOWN WORK TOGETHER. The story helps young children and families talk about their experiences and feelings related to COVID-19 and the need to shelter in place. In the story, the coronavirus has spread to Littletown causing changes in everyone's lives. The story opens doors to conversations about COVID-19, ways that families and communities are working together to keep safe from the virus, family and community strengths, common challenges and reactions in children and adults, ways that families support children and each other, and our intense gratitude for frontline workers.

A caregiver guide is available in the back of the book that provides ways parents can use the story with their children. A companion story, Fighting the Big Virus: Trinka's and Sam's Questions, for how to answer children's questions about the virus is also available.

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