


## Trauma Informed Distance Learning: Supporting Vulnerable Students Remotely During COVID-19



*Tiffany N. Hendershot, MSW, LICSW  
Behavior Support Specialist  
West Virginia Behavior/Mental Health  
Technical Assistance Center*

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## A Collaborative Project of



**West Virginia DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**



*West Virginia  
Behavior/Mental Health  
Technical Assistance Center*



**WEST VIRGINIA  
AUTISM TRAINING CENTER**  
AT MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

2

---

---

---

---

---


---

---


---

Participants will leave with:


- A guide for creating a plan to provide support and check-ins to vulnerable students
- An understanding of priorities that are most important for students experiencing an elevated level of stress
- Knowledge of what to do if you are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a student




**PBIS** Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports




*West Virginia  
Behavior/Mental Health  
Technical Assistance Center*




**Center for Parent Information & Resources**



**WV PBIS**



*West Virginia  
Behavior/Mental Health  
Technical Assistance Center*



**WV ECPBIS**

3

---

---

---

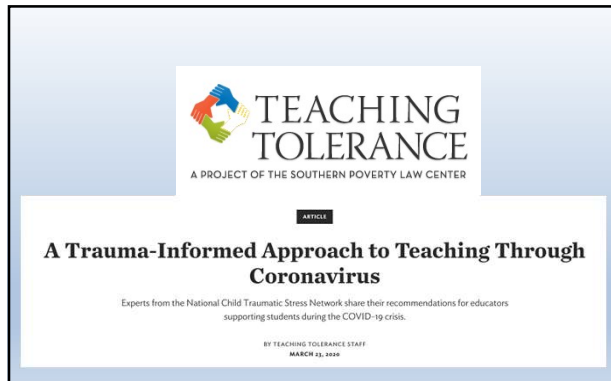
---

---

---

---

---



4

---

---

---

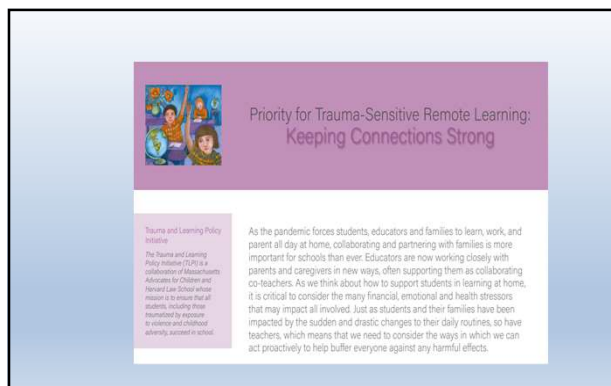
---

---

---

---

---



5

---

---

---

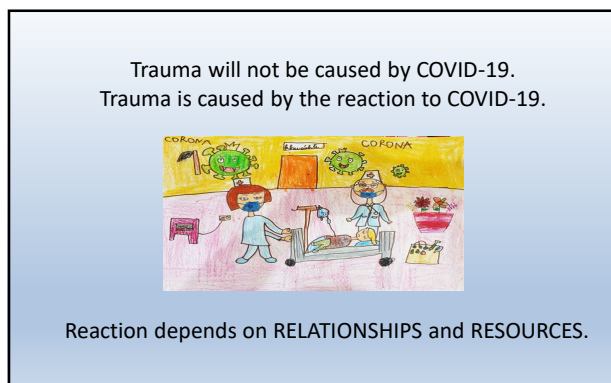
---

---

---

---

---



6

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### Vulnerable Students include:

- Students with a history of
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Childhood Trauma
  - Suicidal Ideation
  - Learning Disorders
  - Behavior Disorders
  - Autism



7

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### Additional Vulnerable Students During COVID-19:

- Students who have a caregiver that:
  - lost job or income
  - Is a health care worker
  - Is an essential worker
  - Is taking care of siblings
  - Is non-English speaking
  - Activated in National Guard
- We don't know what we don't know



8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### What Children Think and Fear

Age	Description
Pre-school (3-5 years)	Not fully able to separate fantasy from reality (fear of a tragic event may be same as fear of monsters under the bed).
	May feel guilty when bad things happen and may worry they did something to cause a bad situation.
	Pick up on parents' fears and anxieties without anyone having to say a word.
	Imagine of fires, smoke and hurt people are seen as very big, powerful and very bad.

[www.nationwidechildrens.org](http://www.nationwidechildrens.org)

9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### What Children Think and Fear

Age	Description
School-age (6-11 years)	Concerned about their own safety and security and that of their family and friends.  Fears can cause emotional problems because they understand reality of a situation, but can't understand the reasons for violence, death or other tragedy.
Adolescents/Teens (12-18 years)	Likely to understand many facts but have trouble accepting the disruption in their lives the event has caused.

www.nationwidechildrens.org

10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Stress Behaviors

Toddlers and Preschoolers	Older Children and Teens
Depression (restless, fidgety, hyperactive, whiny, clinging and demanding behavior)	Depression (sad or withdrawn; trouble eating or sleeping; talking about feeling hopeless)
Unusually angry	Emotional outbursts
Tummy aches	Violet themes in artwork or unusual interest in weapons
Difficulty sleeping	Abdominal pain, headaches, chest pain
Regression (doing things they did when they were younger), for example, a toddler who has been potty trained has "accidents" again	Regression (doing things they did when they were younger) such as sucking their thumbs, bedwetting or clinging to parents

www.nationwidechildrens.org

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Reaching the Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry's 3 Rs

- 1. Regulate**  
(Brainstem and midbrain - the sensory motor brain)  
Help the child to regulate and calm their stress responses - fight, flight, freeze. Offer soothing comfort and reassurance.
- 2. Relate**  
(Limbic brain - the emotional relational brain)  
Connect with the child through attuned, sensitive relationship. Empathise and validate the child's feelings so they feel seen, heard and understood.
- 3. Reason**  
(Cortical brain - the great human 'thinking' brain)  
Now that the child is calm and connected they are able to fully engage in learning.

**Heading straight for the reasoning part of the brain cannot work if a child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.**

*Bruce Perry via Love Pedagogy • Artist: Marcos Rey*

12

---

---

---

---

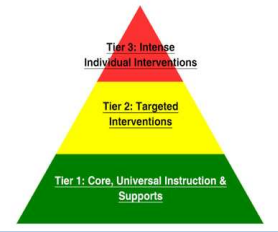
---

---

---

---

### Who is in each Tier now?



Tier 3: 1-on-1 Zoom Calls,  
Focus on Relationship

Tier 2: Weekly Check-Ins,  
Student virtual groups

Tier 1: Send work home  
and it's returned (yay!)

13

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### PRIORITIES: ROUTINES AND PREDICTABILITY

- Give instructions that are easily comprehended
  - Break down into steps
  - Some may be overwhelmed by weekly work
  - Don't assume parents are helping organize
- Teaching new material
  - Can they learn new information right now?
- Predictable agenda
  - Keep changes minimal
  - Explain the change ahead of time



14

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### PRIORITIES: FLEXIBILITY

- Understanding of circumstances
  - Home alone
  - Parents working from home
  - Parents stressed
- Deadlines
  - Talk with parents and students to see if daily or weekly deadlines work best for their situation
- What interests them?
  - Interest increases motivation
  - Allow some room for family to include what they are already doing into lessons



15

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**PRIORITIES:  
COMMUNICATION**



- Privacy Concerns
- Phone calls or Zoom
- Develop a concrete plan (Tues @ 9:30; phone call)
- Ask about barriers to getting food or supplies
- Are they receiving all services they had at school (therapy)
- Give them a chance to talk about thoughts and feelings
  - Do not minimize
- Show you care about them!

16

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**EMPATHY IS KEY IN  
COMMUNICATION**



17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

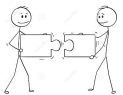
**PRIORITIES:  
CONNECTEDNESS**  
“We will get through this together”

**Connect with EVERY family**

- School provides connection to resources
- Providing needs strengthens relationship with school
- Decide who will connect
  - Relationship established
- Don't bombard family
  - Multiple students in home

**Online Suggestions**

- Give time before starting virtual lesson for students to talk
  - May need to give prompts
- Put students in small groups to work online
  - Virtual puzzles or scavenger hunts



18

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### PRIORITIES: SENSE OF SAFETY

- The belief that your needs and those that you care about will be met.
- The belief that you and those you love are protected from harm.
- Threatened by:
  - Food Insecurity
  - Inability to pay rent or bills
  - Watching too much news
- School is a safety net.
  - Do teachers have resource list or referral source to give families?



Witchgirl117.deviantart.com

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Safety and Wellbeing

**Lose Contact with Child:**

- Varies by county
- Up channel to school administration, counselor, board office
- Keep teacher in the loop with updates
  - Teacher mental health

- Log student contacts
  - Easier to remember as days run together
- Refer to counselor for social and emotional concerns
- Use school resource officer or local law enforcement for welfare checks

West Virginia Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-800-352-6513

7 days a week, 24 hours a day

20

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

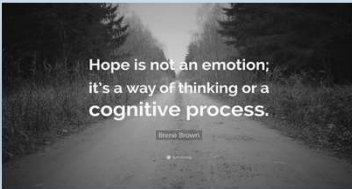
---

### PRIORITIES: CULTIVATE HOPE



Students who have high hopes:  
More successful academically  
Better Friendships  
Creative  
Better Problem Solvers  
Low rates of depression  
Lower anxiety  
Less likely to drop-out

1. Establish short- and long-term goals
2. Create a plan to reach them
3. Follow-Up on Plan



Hope is not an emotion;  
it's a way of thinking or a cognitive process.

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**PRIORITIES:  
EMPOWERMENT**

- Mirroring- Tell children what strengths they have
- Encouragement- belief that they can do hard things now; to give courage
- Give opportunities to make choices and be creative

**5 THINGS THAT I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF...**


1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Whole Child Lens**

Relationships + Safety + Connectedness =  
Prime Learning Environment

Project Based Learning- easily adapted to:

- Meet student and family needs
- Varying schedules
- Special needs students
- Culture of family

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Provide Support to Family**

- Check-In with caregivers
- Share learning and behavior supports used in the classroom
- Connect students and families with school mental health professionals
  - they can make referrals to local resources
- Give guidance to caregivers on how to
  - establish a routine
  - establish child responsibilities
  - establish reasonable expectations of children

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Take Teaching Staff from Overwhelmed to Empowered

- Encourage staff cohesion- teamwork and collaboration
- Give clear guidance to staff ("Into the Unknown" is not good)
- Create Structure and Predictability
- Maintain virtual faculty meetings and team meetings
- Principal offer "office hours" to staff

NOTE: Be respectful of others working hours and maintain boundaries

*Connection gives opportunity for innovation, brain-storming, problem solving, sharing of ideas, etc.*

*Connection is the ultimate self-care strategy right now!*

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Free WV Mental Health Resource

Optum, a division of UnitedHealth, is now offering an emotional support helpline that is available to all West Virginians who may be experiencing anxiety or stress due to the COVID-19 crisis. The free service can be reached 24/7 at 1-866-342-6892

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Action Plan

- Create a way to track contact with the most vulnerable families attending your school
- Decide who will act as the point of contact and build relationship with student/family
- Ensure teachers have access to a local resource list or the number to a local agency providing referrals for families
- Keep connection with and between teachers a priority as an ultimate self-care tool

27

---

---

---


---

---


---

---

---



**Behavior Support Specialists**



**Northern Early Childhood BSS's**  
Sara Imwase  
s.imwase@marshall.edu

**North Region BSS**  
Alissa Zeman  
a.zeman@marshall.edu

**South Region BSS**  
Tara Jones  
t.jones@marshall.edu

**Eastern Panhandle Region BSS**  
Shana Henderson  
s.henderson@marshall.edu

**Mountain Region BSS**  
Jennifer Eastep  
j.eastep@marshall.edu

**Southern Early Childhood BSS's**  
Shana George  
s.george@marshall.edu

**Behavior/Mental Health Technical Assistance Center**

<https://www.marshall.edu/bmhtac/>

28

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



Some of the information was adapted from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) publications, including:

- [this resource created to help school staff when families have to cope in hard times](#);
- [this resource that educators can share with families facing increased financial difficulty and isolation](#);
- [this resource, created for older students, which includes recommendations for coping strategies](#);
- [this toolkit for educators for working with traumatized children](#);
- [this educator-facing resource on secondary traumatic stress](#);
- [this resource on childhood traumatic grief, available in English and Spanish](#);
- [this video series with Dr. Isaiah Pickens, helping to support educators addressing trauma in their students and caring for themselves](#).

29

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**REFERENCES**

- [https://www.tolerance.org/print/127861?exclude\\_images=1](https://www.tolerance.org/print/127861?exclude_images=1)
- <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Trauma-Sensitive-Remote-Learning.pdf>
- <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/helping-children-feel-safe-in-stressful-times>
- Hope, problem-solving ability, and coping in a college student population: some implications for theory and practice, Chang EC. J Clin Psychol. 1998 Nov; 54(7):953-62.
- <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/55679/four-core-priorities-for-trauma-informed-distance-learning>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>
- <https://www.bdperry.com/>

30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---