

MHF-EE CURRICULUM SAMPLE

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Module 1: Investing in Mental Health in the Schools

Impact of Student Mental Health Problems

- Child behavior and emotional disorders can severely affect future educational outcomes
- Children need to be helped early in school to reach their full academic potential
- Schools play an important role in promoting child mental health
- Adequate investment is needed in child mental health for academic achievement
- There is a need to develop preventative versus reactive approaches



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Module 1: Investing in Mental Health in the Schools

Explore!

Answer the following:

(Many **Explore!** exercises follow a discussion and demonstration, and conclude with a debriefing)

- What mental health needs are not being addressed in your school?
- What resources exist in your school and school district?
 - For example, community mental health center, faith-based care, United Way agency
- What is needed?
- Who in your school community is concerned about unmet child mental health needs, and what are they doing about it?
- What can you do about it? (Handout #1)



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Module 1: Investing in Mental Health in the Schools

The MHF Process

A process in which a facilitator cares for students with emotional and behavioral needs and assists with achievement in problem-solving and self-determined goals

- School and community-based helpers
- Empower students to become more self-sufficient
- Reduce stigma and discrimination
- Decrease burden on community health care system
- Save school system money and increase school safety



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Module 2: Preparing for Mental Health Facilitation

Example: Academic Pressures and Mental Health

- As academic stress goes up
 - school achievement and mental health go down
 - student optimism goes down
- Academic stress can lead to severe symptoms including:
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Academic “burnout” reduces positive self-esteem



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Module 2: Preparing for Mental Health Facilitation

Explore!

Let's work together as a group:

1. In your school, who is specifically trained to work with students' mental health problems?
2. Describe the various roles and responsibilities of these professionals
3. What previous interactions have you had with these referral sources and what were the results?
4. What other resources are available in your school and community?



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Module 3: Understanding Students' Feelings

Empathy: An MHF Skill

- The ability to understand students from their perspective
- The emotional connection allows the MHF to think with the student rather than for or about the student
- A deep connection to the emotional state of the student
- The ability to recognize what is important to the student without necessarily agreeing with the student
- Empathy is not sympathy or feeling sorry for the student
- Using empathy allows us to focus on students' feelings instead of moving away from or avoiding emotions
- Exploring and allowing feelings to be expressed provides the support needed to help the student



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Focusing on Feelings

- Feelings are an important part of any communication
- The MHF process provides a safe relationship that helps a student identify and explore emotions
- Students may have difficulty identifying emotions
- Some students may not have the vocabulary for their feelings
- Physical symptoms may mask emotions (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, sore muscles, loss of appetite)



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Social Development Occurs in Stages

- Stages range from birth to death (i.e., cradle to grave)
- Considering what it is like to be your student helps you to identify
 - Their stage of growth
 - The way they understand and make sense of their world
- Also affects your ability to understand your students

Knowledge of child growth and development helps you to:

- Recognize age-related challenges
- Acknowledge age appropriate knowledge and skills
- Determine impact of peers, family, school, gender and other influences



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Complicating Factors in Social Development

- Educational issues
- Peer pressure
- Family belief systems
- Family violence
- Family size
- Child abuse
- Community structure
- Poverty
- Unsafe housing
- Media
- Economic insecurity
- Low self-worth
- Others?



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Diversity Skills

- Interest in other cultures
- Ability to recognize different styles
- Awareness of cultural and language differences
- Sensitivity to communication cues
- Knowledge of cultural myths
- Using culturally sensitive approaches to the helping process
- Concern for the welfare of all students



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Diverse Perceptions

- We all see the world in different ways
- We need to work to find out how a student sees the world
- Students may not act or think the way you believe they *should* because of cultural differences
- We may experience anxiety or uncertainty with strangers from different cultures
- If a student belongs to a cultural group that is not familiar, you may have difficulty understanding the student



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Nine Nonverbal Ways to Communicate

1. Eye contact
2. Body position
3. Head nodding
4. Attentive silence
5. Facial expressions
6. Gestures
7. Physical distance
8. Touch
9. Voice tone



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Demonstration

Watch closely as the instructors or video demonstrate minimal verbal responses and nonverbal responses



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Explore!

- With a partner and an observer, one trainee tells a short story for five minutes while the other listens
- The listener should encourage the talker with minimal verbal responses and nonverbal responses
- The observer should notice and share how minimal verbal responses encouraged the speaker to tell more of the story



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The Importance of Reflecting Meaning

Meaning is the reason:

- The student feels a certain way about the story
- The story is important to the student

Reflecting meaning:

- May offer clarity to the student about actions and feelings
- Shows you have understood the deeper meaning to the story

Meaning is what lies beneath a student's story

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Students Coping With Problems

- Many students will turn to friends, neighbors, voluntary associations, religious leaders, school personnel and family for assistance
 - But, family members may disapprove of seeking mental health care
- Parents tend to speak with a primary support person before seeking formal services
- Informal helping and support networks can be very helpful

Teachers play an important role in helping students understand and solve their problems



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Intensity of the Problem

- Problems range from seemingly minor to life-threatening
- Even small problems can seem unbearable
- We can teach students to distinguish within ranges of problems
- The intensity of the problem comes from the student's distress and lack of control as well as how often the problem occurs



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Intensity of the Problem

- Do not minimize the impact of the problem on the student
 - What adults might see as a minor problem can be critical to the student
- Show consideration for the student's feelings
- In addition to the intensity of the problem, frequency and duration of the problem have an impact



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Positive Communication Strategies

- Build unity in the classroom – *we are all in this together*
- Co-develop class norms with students
- Expect cooperation – listening, taking turns, working together
- Model good communication – effective listening and speaking skills
- Demonstrate and coach – show what you want and give students chances to try out those behaviors, give them feedback on how well they have done
- Explain guidelines for raising hands for obtaining permission and acting at appropriate times



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Problem-Solving and Readiness to Change

- What is causing the most distress?
- What is most important to the student?
- What is the student willing to change?
- How open is the student to making changes?
- What has the best chance for success?
- What situation is the easiest problem to change?



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Goal Setting

- Helps focus attention, action and problem-solving
- Helps stimulate energy and effort
- Provides incentives for accomplishing the goal
 - Clear and specific goals help increase persistence

Goals provide direction!



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Stress, Distress and Disorders in Children

- About 20% have emotional problems
- About 5–12% of children and adolescents experience significant impairment
- As many as two-thirds do not receive mental health services (need-care gap)
- Schools, families and primary care are the major settings for identifying mental stress, distress and disorders in children and adolescents, not formal mental health services



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Explore!

In groups of three, discuss:

Middle and High School

- What is the substance abuse policy in your school?
- How is substance abuse information provided in your school?

Elementary School

- How does stress affect school performance?
- What are good strategies for “early detection” in the classroom?

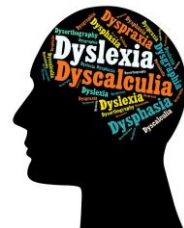


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Learning Disorders (LD)

- About 10% of school-age children have LD
- Most students do not get adequate services for LD
- Schools should work towards supporting students with special needs
- May have co-occurring learning disorders like ADHD



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Learning Disorders (LD)

- Teachers need more awareness and knowledge of LD (and ADHD)
- At risk for psychological problems
- Dyslexia
 - Reading difficulty
 - Memory problems
 - Low school achievement
 - Screen for depression
- Service gap between prevalence estimates and special education identification
- Issues with self-regulation



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Suicide Myth 2

Students who talk about suicide will not harm themselves since they just want attention.

FALSE

- All threats of self-harm should be taken seriously
 - Be cautious when confronted with a student talking about suicide



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Suicide Support and Resources

- Teacher training to recognize risk factors
- School-based suicide prevention programs
- Teach students the warning signs of suicide
- Consider on-campus mental health resources
- Increase visibility of mental health staff
- Gatekeeper training and screening programs in schools
- Collaboration across school staff



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Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Signs and Symptoms

- Preventing wound healing
- Fresh cuts and bruises
- Piercing and cutting skin with sharp objects
- Head banging
- Pulling out hair
- Wearing long sleeves and pants in hot weather
- Possession of sharp objects
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship issues
- Frequent accidents
- Broken bones



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Cyber Bullying

Bullying that takes place using electronic technology, including:

- Cellphones and computers
 - Social media, text messages or chat applications

Examples:

- Hurtful text messages or emails
- Rumors emailed or posted on social networking sites
- Embarrassing pictures, videos or Web sites
- Fake profiles



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Risk Factors for Joining a Gang

- **Poverty:** A sense of hopelessness, low self-worth and diminished pride can be the result of not being able to purchase essential goods and services
 - Students may turn to gangs to earn cash through illegal activities such as involvement with drugs
- **Racism:** When students are denied access to privileges, resources and power, anti-establishment groups might be formed



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Module 14: Common Child and Adolescent Issues: Self-Worth, Bullying, Gangs, LGBTQ, Etc.

Gang Prevention and Intervention

- Educating schools, parents, families and communities about the importance of expressing visible love, nurturing, support and care for at-risk youth
- Creating conflict resolution programs where gang members can be taught how to deal more effectively with conflicts
- Making available a variety of purposeful recreational programs including sports, music, drama and community activities



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Module 15: Facilitating in Crisis, Disaster and Trauma

Children, Adolescents & Trauma

- Exposure to violence often results in mental health problems for children
- Especially vulnerable during disasters or traumatic events
- Students suffer disruptions in their normal developmental path
- Needs might be overlooked because:
 - Parents and other caregivers are overwhelmed
 - Children protect their care-givers by suffering silently



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Module 15: Facilitating in Crisis, Disaster and Trauma

Dealing with Student Trauma

Encourage traumatized students to:

- Limit exposure to traumatic material (Internet, newspapers, television)
- Eat healthy foods, get adequate sleep, reestablish routines
- Engage in relaxing activities
- Stop unhealthy behaviors (too much eating or sleeping, using alcohol)
- Connect with others
- In time, students accept what they are feeling and grieve



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Module 16: Working With Child Maltreatment

General Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Academic Clues

- Learning difficulties may be the result of hunger, not being able to see (no glasses) and not being able to hear
- Sudden or extreme changes in performance
 - Previously good then suddenly disinterested
 - Refusal to change for gym class may be concealing bruises
 - Glasses are not repaired
- Physically disabled or developmentally delayed students are at greater risk
 - Strain of care for families



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Module 17: Making Referrals, Consulting With Mental Health Professionals, and Ending the Helping Relationship

Making Referrals

- Recognize what situations you can and cannot work with
- Consult with mental health personnel in your school
- Become familiar with referral resources available within the community
- Learn who in your area can handle what kinds of situations
- Reduce the barriers to referral sources
- Have a list of resources especially when information is needed quickly



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Module 17: Making Referrals, Consulting With Mental Health Professionals, and Ending the Helping Relationship

When to Refer

The student appears to be:

- Experiencing a **mental disorder**
- Not connected with reality — **psychosis**
- Experiencing **hallucination/dissociation**
- Experiencing **high anxiety**
- Experiencing **depression**
- **Unable to care for self**
- Having **suicidal or homicidal thoughts**
- Suffering from **alcohol or drug abuse**
- A **victim of abuse**



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Good Beginning – Good Ending

- Just as helping has a clear beginning, it should have a clear ending
- If closing or ending is not recognized and handled appropriately, students may end up with more distress and unresolved issues than when they entered the helping relationship



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Contextualizing the MHF Program is Critical

- Places the MHF program in the school and community context where the program will be implemented
- Identifies school and community helpers
- Explores how the MHF program will most effectively work in your school and community
- Encourages participants to become actively involved in learning about student mental health
- Helps identify and address potential areas of implementation and challenges



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