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Brent Stephens, Ed.D., Superintendent

In the midst of COVID-19 pandemic and rapidly changing environments, Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) anticipates that a rise in anxiety and mental health issues in our community. The predictable routine of going to school and connecting with others has been substantially changed during shelter in place and distance learning. Many students have been disconnected from the support and services that were previously provided in person. At the same time, increasing numbers of families are facing financial hardship, some for the first time. Through the lens of equity, the pandemic is have a disproportionate negative impact on African-American and Latino students ¹ and families. Children, youth, and adults who have experienced trauma may see flare ups and exacerbated symptoms that are not always connected to immediate circumstances.

District personnel are adjusting to a new model of Distance Learning. While working remotely, we may not have immediate access to the principal, school counselors, RtI Coordinators, behavioral health clinicians, and classified support staff. BUSD is fortunate to have support and services dedicated to the physical, social, emotional, and behavioral health of our students. While our attention is drawn to how much has changed, we also remember what has remained consistent, for example, our dedication to educating each student in our community.

Guidance for school site personnel:

1. Continue to reach out and connect with your students, families and colleagues. School climate, parent engagement, and connectedness to the school community continues to be important. Even when we can only see you remotely, we see you.
2. Children often act out their feelings rather than verbalize them. If you notice a student who seems to be in distress or in need of support, please attempt to confirm the student's location and contact information for parent and guardian.
3. Listen and empathize with people about their experience and offer what support you can, including connections to resources in Berkeley and the Bay Area.
4. Some children may feel that they are alone or one of the only people going through difficult times. It may help to normalize feelings and encourage students, and the parents and guardians of students, to reach out to caring adults and professionals. Reaching out and asking for help in the midst of a pandemic can be confusing and uncertain. BUSD personnel also proactively attempt to connect with students and families who demonstrate a need for additional support. You are not alone.
5. Encourage parents and guardians to connect with primary care providers and resources in the community by calling 211 from any phone with 510 area code or clicking [here](#) for more information from the City of Berkeley. BUSD Student Services recommends expansion of behavioral health services through the lens of equity, increasing services to

historically under-served students and families. BUSD already has contracts with Niroga Inst., BACR, CTI, Seneca Center, SPG, and other agencies.

6. [Lifelong](#), [BYA](#), and [YSA](#) continue to operate remotely during SIP.
7. If BUSD staff are concerned about a person's immediate safety, they call 911 and then contact their supervisor, school principal, or co-administrator. Mental health crisis and emergencies go directly to the principal or school site administrator. Subsequently, staff members make a referral to the Coordination of Services Team (COST) to link the student and family with ongoing support and services.
8. Suspected or observed child abuse or neglect must be reported within 24 hours to Alameda County Child Protective Services (CPS). Fill out the [CPS report form](#) before calling the CPS 24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline Tel: 510.259.1800. Be sure to obtain the name of the CPS social worker who takes the report. Staff members who do not have access to a fax machine can send in CPS reports via mail. For more information, see www.alamedasocialservices.org
9. Trained BUSD staff conduct [Suicide Risk Assessment](#) and prevention services as needed and available. In preparation for summer break or times that district staff are not available, students, parents, and guardians may practice calling or texting a helpline so taking this step is more familiar, and the phone number stored in their phone.
10. For any students we have still not been able to reach, email sarb@berkeley.net and contact the Office of Family Engagement and Equity, [OFEE](#). To report students who became homeless, email the BUSD Homeless Outreach Program for Education (Berkeley HOPE) hope@berkeley.net. If you need additional support or have questions, please contact your site administrator and immediate supervisor. Information and circumstances are changing rapidly.

Reference 1: <https://west.edtrust.org/covid-19-education-equity-resources-responses/>

Resource Information:

- 24 Hour Crisis Support, Alameda County: 1.800.309.2131
- National Suicide Prevention Helpline: 1.800.273.8225
- Berkeley Mobile Crisis (police non-emergency) 1.510.981.5900

We anticipate that this document will be updated and revised in the future.

Thank you.

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