

OLSS EMOTIONAL/MENTAL WELL-BEING PROGRAM

Here at OLSS, we feel that emotional and mental well-being are just as important as academic learning and will help promote a more healthy learning environment for students to focus on their education. Addressing mental health and promoting emotional and mental well-being in school leads to improved performance, provides hope to children, increase in success, and a brighter future for our children.

Just as we would treat and address a physical injury or broken bone with rushing our kids to the doctor or emergency room for physical injury, we also need to care for their social/emotional/mental health in this manner as well. We need to break the stigma on talking about mental and emotional health with our children. Reach out, ask questions, and utilize resources to help us keep our students healthy both physically and mentally.

“The number of adolescents reporting poor mental health is steadily increasing. Building strong bonds and connecting to youth can protect their mental health. Schools and parents can create these protective relationships with students and help them grow into healthy adulthood.” (youth.gov, 2021) The past two years with the struggles of coping with the stressors of the pandemic and adjusting to new norms, shifts between in school learning and virtual learning, has caused increased stress not only on adults but also on our youth. According to the CDC, the suicide rate for people aged 10 to 24 increased 57.4% from 2007 to 2018. 54%, more than half of people who died by suicide did not have a known mental health condition at the time. Mental Health America reports that suicidal ideation is highest among youth, and over 77,000 adolescents frequently thought about suicide from January to September 2020.

According to recent statistics, more than two thirds of parents who sought help since the start of the pandemic said they had witnessed a decline in their child’s emotional well-being (72%), behavior (68%), and physical health due to decreased activities/exercise (68%). Below are the most common emotional and mental health related challenges parents have sought help for:

Anxiety (40%)

Depression (37%)

Seeking help for problem behavior (30%)

ADHD (30%)

Other learning challenges (23%)

(Child Mind Institute Children’s Mental Health Report 2020)

You are not Alone! OLSS is happy to announce we will be implementing a Mental and Emotional Wellness program in our school to benefit our students to promote a holistic approach to their education, learning, and health. Students grade K-8th will have access to a session of learning about the different types of health (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual). They will also benefit from group activities to promote improved communication among peers, how to handle emotions, stress, and healthy ways to strengthen their mental health.

We are also excited to announce that we have partnered with Caitlin Langreich, M.A., LCPC, CCTP *Mental Health Therapist* from St. Jerome's Counseling Program to provide in-house services to our students. Parents can contact the school nurse at schoolnurse@olss.org if they are interested in services being provided to their student. Students may also be identified as benefiting from sessions

with Ms. Langreich, and an email will be sent to parents from St. Jerome's to offer these services and set up sessions during the school day. Students grade 4-8th will also be offered a free mental health screening (with parent consent). For more information on St. Jerome's Counseling please utilize the following link Counseling Program - St. Jerome Catholic Parish - Hyattsville, MD (stjeromes.org). Families can always pursue other resources outside of school if they would prefer.

I encourage families to visit <https://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/> This resource provides a "Family Tool Kit" under resources and downloads; it also provides age-appropriate activities from elementary to middle school to complete with your children to promote their social-emotional health and well-being. The website gives guidance on where to start and who to call in addressing any mental health related concerns you may have.

If you have questions, or need assistance on guidance or resources, please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance. I am very excited to be able to offer these additional resources to our students right here at our school. I will also be happy to help guide you and your student to resources not only here but also in our community.

Sincerely,

Brandi Hutchins, RN, BSN, OLSS School Nurse
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CONSENT FOR ACCESS TO COUNSELING SERVICES AT OLSS

Our Lady Star of the Sea School understands the importance of social, emotional, and mental well-being and will be offering free in-house counseling services in coordination with St. Jerome's Counseling Program, Caitlin Langreich M.A., LCPC, CCTP *Mental Health Therapist*

Some information about counseling access:

- Students will have access to an in-school counselor to address various needs related to their mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.
- Students learn to talk about their social/emotional/mental health, which is a valuable life-long skill
- Students counseling sessions are not shared or stored with academic records
- Students, parents, and staff may reach out to refer a student to speak with a counselor.
- Parents or guardians will be contacted by St. Jerome's Counseling to set up a profile in their client portal and will email the necessary paperwork. Once the paperwork is completed Caitlin can then set up an appointment with your child during school hours.

***Please complete the attached School Counseling Consent form to provide ongoing access to in school counseling for your student(s)**