



Supporting Students Following a Behavioral Health Hospitalization



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Healthy Driven[™]
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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Goals

01

Use hospital school program effectively.

02

Develop systems to support patients.

03

Help the children in the moment with effective communication.

04

Advocate for them successfully.

Issue #1 - Homework

Fixing homework issues is the single most important thing you can do for a patient in returning to school and can drive many of the changes you make in other areas.

Understanding Stress

From 2018 “State of Kids” Survey – 4700 Naperville area students

- 70+% of all students feel “Moderate to Severe” stress on a daily basis.
 - High school students: 80%
- Most stressful
 - Homework
 - Grades
 - Overscheduling
 - Parental Pressure
- Least Stressful
 - Teachers
 - Material Possessions
 - Cultural & Religious Expectations

Bob's Axioms of Behavioral Health Therapy

- Students are actively trying to solve their problems using their best coping strategies.
- The best approach is to replace negative strategies (self-injury, drug/alcohol abuse, school refusal) with positive ones (mindfulness, decision making skills, distraction, etc.).

Most common school strategies

- Eliminate all homework assignments so they can focus on their mental health...
- Do every assignment, and do it now...
- Do what you think is important so you can pass the test...

Most common school strategies

- Eliminate all homework assignments so they can focus on their mental health...this makes hospitalization a fantastic coping skill they can use the next time homework is overwhelming!
- Do every assignment, and do it now...means that you're not helping meet the student where they're at, and they'll never catch up.
- Do what you think is important so you can pass the test...means they either do nothing, or they do everything. They can't organize.

Academic Expectations

- Adaptation, not elimination.
 - NEVER eliminate homework assignments, offer alternatives.
 - Easy assignments are best.
- Dropping classes.
 - Start with Foreign Language and Science.
 - Maintain electives/favorites if possible.

Online Education

- Work is easy to obtain with
 - Google Classroom
 - Microsoft Office Suite
 - Canvas
 - Blackboard
 - PlusPortal
 - Schoology
 - Etc.
- If no work is available online, the school can easily fax or email homework to the hospital teacher *once trained to do so.*



Homework is hard when you're in behavioral health!

- Therapy Homework might include:
 - Writing/drawing assignments
 - Spending time with family, interacting together
 - Staying off computer/phone.
- School Homework probably includes:
 - Writing/drawing assignments
 - Spending time studying alone in a quiet, isolated place
 - Extensive use of computer

Teachers ask – How do I differentiate?



Let the student approach you with details if they are comfortable.



Treat absences as if they were out for a funeral.



Issues & Triggers may or may not be something that is related to you or to school.

Differentiation Continued

- CONTENT, not quantity or level of difficulty is the main item to differentiate, if the opportunity presents itself.
 - Identify possible triggers you can think of and approach student individually to discuss.
 - Never start with an “out” - they must do an alternative assignment.
- Questionable content includes:
 - Nutrition Labels
 - Anything related to celebrities or models
 - Suicides/death of characters
 - Characters struggling with mental health issues.
 - Drug Awareness
 - Mental Health
 - “Heavy” subject matter
 - Anything related to past trauma

Parents ask – How do I help homework completion?

- Does your child have an adequate space to work on homework that is:
 - Public (not in their room)
 - Near you (so you can help)
 - Free of distractions (clean, no TV/music)
 - Can you work synchronously with them?
- Do you have access to their online portals for:
 - Assignments
 - Grades
- Do you have a printer?

Organization

- Biggest Time Sink – Email
 - Help them organize, create folders and “rules”
 - In, then out.
 - Disable most notifications
 - Sort advertisements & college emails to a separate area.
 - Check it once, then you’re done.
- Create to-do lists
- Printed work is easier to manage than online work
- Go through backpacks & folders. Help them manage “stuff”.

Issue #2 - Communication

Nothing makes a student feel worse than a mishandled exchange that is perceived as insensitive, negative or judgmental.

Allowed communication is based on the Release of Information.



Schools want all the information to help coordinate services. **It is 100% up to you and your child what you wish to share or not.**



Best info to share:

Dates of treatment

Medication changes

Allow homework coordination

Parents ask -
What
communication
do I allow?

Interaction with patient

- The most important thing to do is build relationship with the patients - use “we” or “us” for team building.
- “I feel” removes judgment.
- Meet with patients 1:1 when there are challenges.
 - To meet with teachers, coming before or staying after class is best option
 - Use open ended questions
 - Ask the patient to generate a solution
 - Assist in problem solving. This may be a skill the patient needs to strengthen.

Aim for small, simple moments that make school feel “good.”

Skills to use when talking with students

- Listening
- Validation
- Form alliance
- Remaining calm
- Offering choices
- Limit setting
- Explaining actions
- Know body language
- Respect personal space

Intervention

Other Communication Tips

- Use “...because...?”, not “why?”
- Good questions:
 - “What’s stopping you?”
 - “Is there anything else you want to tell me?”
 - “How can I help to make this easier on *us*?”
 - “Is there anyone else I should talk to about this?”
 - “What skills can you use?”



Issue #3 – Partnership

A strong hospital school program benefits the hospital and can greatly improve the overall outcome returning to school...but only if the school, the parents and the hospital are willing to partner with each other.

Our Community



Average
Median
Home Value
– 3x
average IL
home value

Median
Household
income -
More than
2x average
IL income

Crime rate –
only 25% of
IL average.

2.5x the
average
number of
police
officers for
an IL city.

Money Drives the Quality of Programs Offered

- Hospitals do not have many requirements or incentives to provide this school/tutoring service.
- Many other hospitals in our area offer minimal support:
 - Insufficient number of teachers
 - Nurses running school hour
 - Privatized curriculum
 - Busy work
- Illinois is one of very few states to offer reimbursement to schools for all hospitalized and homebound tutoring programs.

Hospitals...work
with your
schools!

- Hospitals – the school is your #1 referral source for new patients. If they have a good experience with you, they will send their students to you.
- Hospital teachers – work on assignments that come from the patient’s school ONLY.
- Meet with school leaders to discuss transition opportunities and supports available.

Educating the School

01

Get someone from your hospital involved in local district's Teacher Institute Day.

02

Host school breakfast meetings to teach them about hospital practices, paperwork, and service offerings.

03

Invite members of guidance staff for tours, CEU presentations, and collaborative events where you can discuss barrier to service.

What does your school offer?

- Is there a designated “hospital person” in your counseling department? Who is the person who should be doing this job?
(does the hospital and parent know who this person is?)
- Is it policy to have teachers post assignments online? Are they following through? Are they posting blanks, or only keys?
(Do the students know how to get onto these?)
- Parents – do you have your child’s Online Portal Login info?

Parents...work
with everybody

Advocate for dropping a class
immediately:

Language
electives

Sciences

Avoid
dropping the
“favorite class”

*It is unreasonable and often harmful to
move forward under the belief that a
student who has spent significant time in
a hospital program can successfully keep
up with AP coursework.*

Options for when it isn't working...

- Parent-monitored studying/homework time.
- Tutoring
 - Private tutors
 - Kumon/Sylvan
 - Library
 - Teen centers
 - Park districts
- Limit (don't remove):
 - Video games
 - Phone/computer access
 - Friend time
 - Sports (park districts?)

Failing/Withdrawing from Classes

Summer School

Online-only Coursework or Credit Recovery

Drop from AP/honors to regular

For freshmen/sophomores, taking classes later.



Questions?



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