

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PLAN

A Resilience Plan for Flattening the Mental Health
Curve and Promoting Community Wellness

Version 8: 6.1.2020



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COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PLAN



Result

All of Alexandria's workforce and residents are mentally healthy throughout and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Starting Agreements

Our Work Today Presents Opportunities in the Future to:



- Better connect people with the right mental health (MH) resource to meet their more immediate needs;
- Set up an integrated, city-wide system to address the lingering needs that will follow the current crisis and the anticipated transition to our "new normal"; and
- Open doors for sustainable systems that will improve mental health service assess for the long term

Available/Existing Mental Health Resources to Help People Cope with COVID-19



- An array of mental health resources existed pre-COVID that can be leveraged during this crisis
 - Employee Assistants Programs (**EAP**), Alexandria's public behavioral health system the Community Services Board (**CSB**) and **clinicians** offering a sliding scale services
 - **Alexandria City Public Schools' Student Support Team** continues to provide support services and consultations to students via email, Zoom, and Google Voice during school hours.
 - **The Anne R. Lipnick Special Education Parent Resource Center (PRC) at ACPS** assists parents to become partners in their child's education. The PRC serves the diverse families of children with disabilities in the Alexandria City community. They promote the understanding of the special education process by conducting free workshops and training sessions. Learn more about PRC [here](#).
- **Additional COVID specific resources** are available and are continuously being updated. They include:
 - [Assistance from a Distance](#) and [Wellness Resource Guides](#) that have been created for [individuals](#), [families](#), and [youth](#) in English, Spanish, Amharic and Arabic.

Available Resources for Building Resilience During Resilience Week

- [Resilience Week Resources](#)

Available/Existing Tools for Communication



- **DCHS Communications and the Office of Communication and Public Information** are already actively engaged in efforts to inform City staff and residents of the resources that are available to them. Our communication plans will dovetail with their efforts.
- **Social Media Platforms**
- **Alex311** is the City of Alexandria's customer service initiative to connect customers to 175+ City services in a variety of convenient ways - online, through the mobile app, on Facebook and Twitter, by phone/text, or in person.

- Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy and Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria operate a **Teen Text Line** to communicate useful information to youth
- Alexandria Health Department has a **COVID Hotline** to answer questions about COVID. The Alexandria COVID-19 Hotline at [703.746.4988](tel:703.746.4988), weekdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Virginia residents can also call the Virginia Department of Health public information line at [877.ASK.VDH3](tel:877.ASK.VDH3).
- **Alexandria Safe Place (Youth in Crisis Hotline)** is a national program that has been in the City for over 25 years. Youth in crisis receive immediate help and safety from one of the 30 Safe Place facilities throughout Alexandria, including recreation centers, fire stations and libraries. Licensed through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, these places are where youth can go or call to get directed to services by staff trained to provide support. 793.746.5400 - available 24 hours per day.
- **Fairfax County Parent Support Line.** 703-324-7720
- **CrisisLink** Call: 703.527.4077 or text CONNECT to 85511

Existing City-Wide Efforts that Promote Community Wellness



- Alexandria has its own **Trauma-Informed Community Network (TICN)** called Resilience Alexandria: Inform. Support. Elevate (“RAISE”). RAISE is a network of approximately 200 members representing over 60 public and private sector agencies and is primed to lead this effort
- **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)** made Mental Health a priority for the next five years
- **Children and Youth Master Plan (CYMP)** made youth mental health and wellness a priority for the next five years
- **Alexandria City Public Schools Strategic Plan 2025** will intentionally focus on social emotional development of students.



Partners

Communication Plan/Targeted Outreach to:



“Helpers” (professional staff)

Rationale: The professional staff in Alexandria’s human services sector have built trusting relationships with the community members who use their services and the partners they collaborate with to provide those services. They can be called upon to share information with the people they have connections with. Our community’s helpers are also under a significant amount of stress and can experience burn-out and vicarious trauma, so it’s important that they receive content about self-care and mental health supports too, to stay healthy.

Organizations that can provide outreach to helpers include:

- **Alexandria’s Trauma-Informed Community Network, RAISE**
 - **Role:** Backbone Coordinator for Resilience Plan. Use a “calling tree” style process to have members distribute information to their external partner individuals, community leaders and organizations.

- **Dept. of Community and Human Services (DHCS) Communications Team and the Office of Communications and Public Information (OCPI)**
 - **Role:** Help develop and distribute content that includes MH resources and information to a targeted audience
- **Alexandria City Public Schools Department of Student Support, Alternative Programs, and Equity (ACPS - DSSAPE)**
 - **Role:** Regularly provides information, professional development opportunities, and consultations with SST members to assist them through the current COVID-19 crisis.



Communities of Color and Immigrant Groups

Rationale: The coronavirus further compounds the chronic stress from structural racism and historical inequities that Black Americans and low-income immigrant communities face today. Black Americans account for a disproportionate number of coronavirus-related deaths in the U.S. Getting access to healthcare is a challenge, especially after the Public Charge Rule was enacted, limiting certain immigrants' access to federal benefits. It's vital that outreach is done in these communities by trusted liaisons to ensure that people who are experiencing stress and trauma are connected to the supports that they need to heal and remain healthy and resilient.

Organizations that can provide outreach to communities of color include:

- **Key community and faith leaders**
 - **Role:** Provide support to people in areas where there is less help-seeking or access is suspected by connecting them with the mental health hotline and delivering MH information and resources.



Families

Rationale: Parenting during COVID-19 is hard. Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can be overwhelming for children and their families. How caregivers handle this stressful situation can affect how their children manage their worries. Yet it can be very difficult for caregivers to communicate a sense of calm to their child when they are struggling to cope with their own anxiety. Outreach to families, letting them know the various channels that exist in our community that can help them regulate their stress, can be just the thing that they need to offer a calm, stable and predictable “home base” for their children.

Organizations that can provide outreach to Alexandria's families include:

- **Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) DSSAPE and Parent Resource Center (PRC)**
 - **Role:** Outreach to families, including families of children with disabilities, providing them with information and resources
- **Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)**
 - **Role:** Outreach to families with MH information and resources



Residents

Rationale: All of Alexandria's residents are dealing with the very real challenges that the coronavirus pandemic poses on our healthcare, educational, economic, food, transportation, and social systems. When we are facing a crisis of any sort, fear and anxiety are normal, natural responses to challenging and dangerous situations. Alexandrians need to know what they can do that will help them cope with their emotions. Widespread outreach that puts information and resources in the “paths” of Alexandria's residents is needed to let everyone know what help exists.

Organizations that can provide outreach to Alexandria’s residents include:

- **Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA)**
 - **Role:** Outreach to residents who live in public housing with MH information and resources
- **Partner: City’s numerous Boards and Commissions**
 - **Role:** Comprised of members from throughout the City; promote access and use of MH resources.
- **Office of Communications and Public Information**
 - **Role:** Distribute content that includes MH resources and information across
- **Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)**
 - **Role:** Outreach to families with MH information and resources



Tools: 311, Mental Health Hotline and Parent Support Line/Text Line

Fairfax County

- **Role:** Operates a Parent Support Line for parents in need of support.
- **Alex311 System**
 - **Role:** This existing system can serve as our COVID mental health “hotline.” The 311 liaison will have COVID MH resources and can direct callers to resources accordingly

Redeployed staff from City Departments

- **Role:** Operate a COVID mental health hotline offering informational support and comfort to staff or resident callers

911 Dispatch, DV and CPS hotlines, and Alexandria Health Department COVID-19 Hotline

- **Role:** Direct calls to 311 on COVID mental health matters

Outreach Volunteer(s) in Chirilagua

- **Role:** Inform Chirilagua community about the Mental Health Hotline

Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy and Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria

- **Role:** ACAP and SAPCA can use their Teen Text Line to communicate information and resources to youth



Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)

- **Role:** RPCA is licensed to operate Alexandria Safe Place (Youth in Crisis Hotline).

Post-Pandemic

DCHS Youth Development Team

- **Role:** Focus part of the Youth Leadership Conference on helping our young people recover from the pandemic and foster their ability to cope moving forward

RAISE and SAPCA

- **Role:** Champion of MH Tactics in the Community Health Improvement Plan. Will deliver trauma-informed trainings in faith-based communities and advocacy workshops to increase individual’s and community’s skills in advocating for their MH needs

ACPS and DCHS

- **Role:** Work together to integrate mental health strategies into the school day to promote student wellness. ACPS will continue to refer students to DCHS Child and Family Behavioral Health Services.





Communication Plan/Targeted Outreach

Strategy 1: Follow a Communications Plan that makes available resources easily accessible to people seeking them and targets outreach to communities in order to put resources “in the paths” of those who need them.

- **Partners:** DCHS Communications, OCPI, RAISE Network Members, Key community and faith leaders, ACPS, Boards and Commissions, PTAs, ARHA
- **Action 1a:** Work with Communications Teams to:
 - **Promote City and ACPS Mental Health Resources.** Promote the array of mental health resources that existed pre-COVID, including: Employee Assistants Programs (EAP), CSB, clinicians offering a sliding scale services, and ACPS’s Student Support Team.
 - **Promote Coping with COVID Resources.** Promote the additional COVID specific resources that are available and are continuously being updated. COVID-Related Coping Resources include: [Assistance from a Distance](#) and [Wellness Resource Guides](#) that have been created for [individuals](#), [families](#), and [youth](#) in English, Spanish, Amharic and Arabic.
 - **Promote the ACPS Parent Resource Center.** Add contact info and the resources available to families, specifically families of children with disabilities, to the COVID Wellness Resource Guides.
 - **Action:** Include in the Wellness Guide contact info of the mental health professionals who are specialized in treating the mental health of children with disabilities and their families.
 - **Multisensory Media.** Ensure that multisensory and trauma-informed approaches are used when engaging the public in mental health strategies (i.e. produce a podcast (hear) and short videos (see), disseminate flyers/ infographics (touch) throughout the community).
 - Work with Alexandria Health Department to develop content for a 90 second animated video in several languages about mental wellness and social connectedness.
 - Ask Key Community and Faith Leaders about the best ways to reach their community members with information.
 - Adopt “Flatten the Curve” terminology
 - Use social media to promote regular postings on popular platforms and encourage partners to share broadly.
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Co-Coordinator and DCHS Communications Team Member
 - **Timeline:** 4/14 – 5/9; ongoing
 - **Partner with ACPS and DCHS to Promote Resilience Week Activities.** Roll out a public relations campaign for Resilience VA Week to kick off these MH Strategies
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Co-Coordinator and DCHS Communications Team Member
 - **Timeline:** 4/14 – 5/9
- **Action 1b: Calling Tree.** Design and start a “calling tree” style process to have members distribute information to their external partner individuals, community leaders and organizations.
 - **TREE:** Reach out from central “trunk” (RAISE/DCHS - CCF) to subsequent “branches” – our partners, then their networks and so on.

- **Assigned to:** RAISE Communications & Awareness Chair
 - **Timeline:** Ongoing, as-needed basis
- **Action 1c: Contact Networks.** Whenever new MH and resilience resources are made available by the Communications Team, contact the following people and ask to share message with network:
 - ACPS COVID Webpage
 - ACPS DSSAPE
 - ACPS Parent Resources Center
 - ACPS FACE Center
 - SHAB
 - Teen Text Lines
 - Boards and Commissions
 - PTAC
 - Alive!
 - ARHA
 - Gang Prevention and Community Responsibility Group
 - ACHSO listserv
 - YSCC
 - Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria
 - Alexandria Mentoring Partnership
 - Mayors Campaign to Prevent Bullying
 - SAPCA and ACAP listservs
 - EJI Committee
 - Civic Associations
 - Opioid Workgroup
 - Sexual Assault Center’s Peer Advocates
 - LGBTQ Task Force
 - Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness
- **Assign to:** RAISE Communications & Awareness Chair
 - **Timeline:** Ongoing, as-needed basis



Resilience Week VA

Strategy 2: Collaborate with other Virginia TICNs in the first annual Resilience Week Virginia to bring resilience-building activities and events to all Virginians.

- **Partners:** DCHS Communications, ACPS DSSAPE, Mindful Junkie, DCHS Youth Development Team, Fairfax TICN, Greater Richmond TICN, SCAN, INOVA, DCHS Child and Family Behavioral Health Services, City HR, DCHS CCF
- **Action 2a: Resilience Week Campaign.** Adapt the Greater Richmond’s social media toolkit to share daily ideas and resources that help us build resilience in our personal lives, families, work lives and community.
 - **Assigned to:** DCHS Communications and RAISE Co-Coordinator
 - **Timeline:** 4/14 – 5/9
- **Action 2b: Daily Mindfulness Sessions with Students.** Engage students of all ages in 30 minutes of mindfulness every day during Resilience Week. These daily mindfulness sessions will air twice a day on the ACPS station.
 - **Assigned to:** Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), DCHS Youth Development Team, and Mindful Junkie
 - **Timeline:** 3/24-5/8
- **Action 2c: ACE Interface Trainings.** Deliver two mini-ACE Interface and Resilience trainings virtually to the public. These trainings will raise awareness of the ACEs study, the impact ACEs have on our lives, and ways to build community resilience.
 - **Assigned to:** Fairfax TICN, SCAN, and RAISE Co-Coordinator
 - **Timeline:** 2/28-5/8

- **Action 2d: Mental Health and Resilience Town Hall.** Host a virtual Town Hall event for City Employees. This event will focus on promoting mental health and resilience among City Employees and the resources available to them.
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Co-Coordinators, DCHS Communications, DCHS IT, DCHS CCF
 - **Timeline:** 4/28-5/7
- **Action 2e: Feature Alexandria ‘s Resilience Activities on ACEs Connection.** The Greater Richmond TICN has asked if they can promote RAISE’s activities on their [blog](#) as well as on [ACEs Connection](#) during Resilience Week.
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Co-Coordinator
 - **Timeline:** 4/23-5/8



Tools: 311, Mental Health Hotline and Parent Support Line/Text Line

Strategy 3: Leverage existing tools and volunteers to help people seeking MH support.

- **Partners:** City’s 311 service (DCHS 311 Liaison), RPCA’s Safe Place, Meals on Wheels volunteers, 911 Dispatch, DV and CPS hotlines, AHD COVID 19 Hotline, ACAP and SAPCA’s Teen Text Line, Fairfax County
 - **Action 3a: Leverage Parent Support Line and Text Line:** Partner with Fairfax County, SAPCA, ACAP, ACPS Parent Resource Center, SCAN, and Child and Family Behavioral Health Services and refer families to the Parent Support Lines. Monitor the number of callers/texts from Alexandria and how it’s going.
 - **Action:**
 - Recruit enough staff to cover M-F work hours.
 - Assign days of the week to staff.
 - Train staff.
 - Start the new Campaign and begin marketing.
 - Follow up with involved partners.
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Training Committee
 - **Timeline:** 4/20-6/5
 - **Action 3b: Leverage Alex311.** Contact Center of Economic Support Director to see if 311 can serve as our COVID MH “hotline.” If so, ask if they can share an example of a Knowledge-Based Article.
 - Use the example of the Knowledge-Base Article to develop a new Article that will help the 311 liaison to direct callers seeking mental health support accordingly
 - Share the Knowledge-Based Article and COVID MH resources with 311 Liaison. Liaison can make appropriate referrals.
 - **Assigned to:** Incident Response Team (IRT) Liaison
 - **Timeline:** Outreach to CES Director - 4/20-4/26. Develop Article – 4/27-5/3.
 - **Mobilize Volunteers:** Develop a training guide/toolkit that will prepare volunteers to support callers seeking MH help. Guide/Toolkit should include a continuum of ways to support callers seeking help, including resources for older adults and adults with disabilities.
 - The Guide/Toolkit can use the message that the Fire Department sent to its staff as a model to develop a tier system of support. i.e., if you’re feeling stressed, talk to

someone you trust; if you're in need of professional, clinical help, call _; if you're in need of faith-based guidance, call_;

- Identify volunteers (redeployed City staff from City Departments) to operate MH Hotline.
- Train volunteers to receive calls from the 311 liaison and provide support to callers seeking MH help
 - **Assign to:** RAISE Training Committee Co-Chair, IRT Liaison, RAISE Training Committee Member, and the Sexual Assault Center's Volunteer Developer
 - **Timeline:** Development Toolkit: 4/27-5/10. Train Volunteers: 5/11-5/15.
- **Action 3c: Promote Mental Health Support Lines and Alexandria Safe Place (Youth in Crisis Hotline).** Use methods outlined above in Actions 1a-c to inform everyone of the support line.
 - Inform 911 Dispatch, DV, CPS, and the Health Department's COVID-19 hotlines to direct calls to 311 on COVID MH matters
 - Promote the support lines via advertisements in local papers, zebra, etc.
 - **Assigned to:** RAISE Communications & Awareness Chair and DCHS Communications
 - **Timeline:** 5/18-5/22.
- **Action 3d: Identifying High-Risk Situations and how to handle it:** In an effort to keep the community safe, research resources on how to identify high-risk situations virtually. Empower people to use these tools, information, and strategies dealing with things that they are seeing that may be of concern.
 - **Action:** Develop and disseminate a general checklist of the five signs of risk and the steps to take. Mandated and non-mandated reporters (people redeployed in different roles) alike will want to know how to respond and get help.
 - **Existing Resource:** Darkness to Light new training – free and 30 min. D2L.org
 - **Audiences/Who might have eyes on these situations:**
 - Mandated Reporters
 - Volunteers
 - People who work with children
 - People who work with older adults
 - People who work with people with disabilities
 - Grocery Stores, Drug Stores, Convenience Stores, Liquor Stores
 - Adult Day Centers
 - Home Health Aids
 - Superintendents of Buildings
 - Youth
 - Neighborhood Health and Primary Care
 - Food Distribution Sites
 - **Assign to:** Child Welfare Services, DV, Adult Protection, and CAPCA
 - **Timeline:** June 2020



Resiliency Guide/Toolkit

Strategy 4: Develop a Resiliency Guide/Toolkits for kids, adolescents, and adults that connects mindfulness tools with mindfulness actions (i.e. stress ball (tool) with live meditation (action)). Yoga cards (tool) with yoga (action). Books on building resilience (tool) with reading club over virtual platform (action).

- **Existing Resource:** SCAN has books on resilience for children with guided questions for families to discuss included on their website.
- **Where:** Pick up/drop off sites that may include the above list of audiences.
- **Assign to:** Members of the Training Committee

Racial, Economic, Immigrant Trauma and Healing

Strategy 5: Promote the use of the equity lens in decision making.

- **Partners:** DCHS Racial Equity Core Team
 - **Action 5a: Coping Resources for Town Hall.** Develop a continuum of resources to share at Tuesday's Town Hall Event: Facing Racism. Demanding Change.
 - **Action 5b: Coping Webpage.** Develop a webpage on City's website to include Resources for Racial Healing and Coping with Racism and Trauma
 - **Action 5c: Elevate Local and Global Racial Justice Work.** Ask RAISE members for names of local organizations already doing racial justice, equity, and healing work that we can elevate.
 - **Action 5d: Use Equity Lens on Trainings.** Specifically highlight these traumas in trauma trainings. Use equity lens when developing training content
 - **Action 5e: What Informs the Work.** Events taking place, like the Town Hall series on Facing Racism and Demanding Change, will inform us on what's needed.
- **Preliminary owners:** RAISE Co-Chair and Training Committee Co-Chair



Post-Pandemic

Strategy 6: Support existing efforts that aim to promote community wellness and resiliency.

- **Partners:** DCHS Youth Development Team, SAPCA, ACAP, CYMP, DCHS Sexual Assault Center, Voices for Virginia's Children, LGBTQ Task Force
- **Action 6a: Youth Recovery.** Help our young people recover from the pandemic and foster their ability to cope moving forward.
 - **Youth Leadership Conference:** The Youth Development Team is currently planning their annual Youth Leadership Conference (YLC). Part of the YLC will be focused on supporting youths' recovery from the pandemic and building their resiliency.
 - **Timeline:** Conference Planning – Now. Conference - August 2020
 - **The Children and Youth Master Plan** includes two specific strategies that focus on decreasing youth depression and anxiety and promoting their wellbeing.
 - **Timeline:** Currently in development. Implementation will begin in Fall 2020.
 - **Virtual Resources for LGBTQ Youth:** Identify all of the current resources available to LGBTQ Youth and encourage those organizations to continue to offer those resources virtually.
- **Action 6b: Workforce Recovery.** Help Alexandria's workforce recover from the pandemic and ensure their sense of safety as they reenter workspaces.
 - All City employees are invited to participate in six, 30-minute "Mindful Wellness Circles," modeled after ACPS' Wellness Circles. These serve as a resource to help employees deal with stress related to COVID-19 and other life and work situations.
 - **Timeline:** June – August 2020.
 - Create guidance to the workforce on how to create a safe workspace.
 - **Timeline:** June – August 2020.
- **Action: 6c: ACES Prevention.** Support student safety and prevent ACEs during the summer.
 - **Prevent Summer ACEs:** Begin preparing for how caring adults and youth can prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect during the summer months.

- ACPS is considering what their summer offerings at will look like as well as what will social emotional support look like. Currently looking at trauma-informed support counseling to implement next year.
 - Outreach will be done to ACE Interface founders. ACE Interface curriculum can be used when working with youth.
 - **Assign to:** Sexual Assault Center’s Peer Advocates and RAISE Member(s).
 - **Timeline:** June - July 2020.
- **Action 6d: Trauma Trainings.** Provide trauma-informed trainings to the faith-based community to build their capacity to deliver trauma-informed care
 - **Trauma-informed Trainings:** Once RAISE has a cohort of trainers who can provide trauma 101 trainings and the ACE Interface, RAISE will work to partner with faith leaders to deliver trauma-informed trainings to their communities.
 - **Assign to:** RAISE Training Committee and SAPCA
 - **Timeline:** FY 2021-2022. Potentially during Trauma & Resilience Summits
- **Action 6e: Advocacy Trainings.** Provide training on advocacy for mental health and trauma-informed legislation, policies, and practices at the state and local levels.
 - **Advocacy Trainings:** Host a Trauma and Resilience Summit which will include an Advocacy Track where participants will enhance their skills and knowledge in legislative and policy advocacy toward advancing trauma-informed policies and practices at the programmatic, local, state and national levels.
 - **Assign to:** Voices for Virginia’s Children
 - **Timeline:** FY 2021-2022. Potentially during Trauma & Resilience Summits
- **Action 6f: Performance Measurement.** Measure our performance to ensure that we’re doing the right things and we’re doing those things right.
 - **Evaluation Plan:** Part of the application that RAISE submitted for the FACT Grant included an evaluation plan for measuring the performance of the Summit’s activities. The Youth Master Plan will also use the Results-Based Accountability framework for measuring performance in promoting youth mental health and wellness. Use these to build in other activities.
 - **Assign to:** RAISE Co-Coordinator
 - **Timeline:** Draft by 6/25
- **Action 6g: Overarching strategy for RAISE.** Continue moving forward RAISE work plans, addressing the disparities that COVID has magnified.