

Second May TIC Tip of the Month
Adapted from The Ohio State University
CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT



“Anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you.” ~ Misty Copeland

May is National Mental Health Month, and now, more than ever, the well-being of students, school staff members, and parents/caregivers is of the utmost importance. In Ohio, the Whole Child is at the center of the strategic plan for education. The Whole Child includes the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of well-being. School counselors have a vital role in attending to the needs of the Whole Child. School counselors and other school staff can partner with families to support their children as they process a range of emotions such as grief, anxiety, and loneliness. As the 2019-2020 school year comes to a close, counselors also help students, families, and staff to celebrate this year’s achievements and plan for future transitions.

Effective Approaches to Partnering with Families to Support Students’

Social-Emotional Needs

- Raise awareness with parents and guardians about how trauma and difficult emotions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic might be affecting students’ wellbeing.
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Below are questions educators and school personnel can ask when connecting with students and families to help identify whether support is needed or a safety concern may be present. Always think of the child’s safety first. Consider the possibility that the child may not feel safe talking. Be mindful of how the child’s caregiver responds to your questions. If responses seem out of character or strained, consider contacting

1-855-OHCHILD. Please be prepared to describe how the dynamics of the call caused concern or seemed inconsistent with the answers that were given.

The following are questions to ask families:

Q: Is now a good time to talk? If not, is there a better time for me to call?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Is everyone OK? Is there someone I can call for you?
- Are there any safety concerns for you or your children? Do you need help right now?
- How are things going with your child's education at home?

- What is going well?
- Is your child struggling with schoolwork?
- Do you have any concerns you would like to discuss?

Q: Is everyone able to get what they need to get by (for example, food, clothing, housing, medical care)? Have there been any problems?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Are you able to access what you need to care for your family? What would help?
- Who can help you? Do you have supportive family, friends or neighbors to help you and your children?

Q: What is it like for your family to be staying home without any breaks? How is everyone getting along with each other?

Potential follow-up questions:

- How is everyone passing the time? Do you have activities you do together? Do you need ideas?
- How are you providing downtime or "away" time for family members when needed?
- How is everyone coping with stress? Are you finding it difficult to bounce back or manage?
- Is anyone having a hard time? What seems to be bothering them the most? What makes it better or worse?

Q: How are things going with your child's behavior and social or emotional health?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Have you noticed changes in your child's behavior? Are you concerned?
- Who were your children connected to outside the home before the pandemic began? How are they staying in touch with those friends?
- Does your child seem more anxious, scared or depressed?
- Do you have social, emotional or mental health support if needed?

The following are questions to ask students:

Q: Tell me about how things are going at home. How are things going for you?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Are you feeling OK?
- Are you worried about anything?

Q: Who is taking care of you? How are they doing?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Who makes sure you have everything you need? What do they do?
- Where do you sleep at night? Does anyone else sleep with you? Do you sleep well?
- Who wakes you up in the morning?
- Who takes care of you when you get hurt? What do they do?
- Who goes out and gets food for you? What do you like to eat? Who makes your meals? Who do you eat with?

Q: How is everyone getting along with each other? Is anyone having a hard time?

Potential follow-up questions:

- Who lives or stays in your home (including pets)? Who visits?
- Are you worried about anyone? Why?
- How can you tell when someone in your home is having a hard time? What do they do? What makes them feel better?

Q: Tell me about what you do all day.

Potential follow-up questions:

- What things do you like to do at home? What don't you like to do?
- Do you have responsibilities at home? What are they?
- Provide parents and caregivers with tools to engage with their children in age-appropriate discussions about their feelings about how life has changed in the past few months.

Q: How are you feeling about remote learning?

Potential follow-up questions:

- What are you missing about your friends or teachers?
- What are you missing the most about school?
- What weekend activities are you missing?
- Since the Covid-19 stay at home order, do you have any changes that you like?
- What are you looking forward to this summer?
- Are there new hobbies you would like to start or need help starting?

The following final tips provide additional guidance for family engagement.

- Continue to ensure that students are safe at home and their basic needs are met. Educators have the opportunity to build additional positive adult relationships for students.
- Help families attend to their children's feelings of social isolation by providing virtual social gatherings for students. Even very brief (5 min) social interactions can lift someone's spirits immeasurably.
- Provide opportunities for celebration and transition experiences as the year closes, including transitions between grade levels, schools, and graduation.
- Ask families what social engagements students are missing. Consider holding virtual meetings for clubs and teams or opening virtual lunchrooms on video conferencing platforms to build a social support network for isolated students.
- Collaborate with families to plan creatively and inclusively for end-of-the-year traditions such as dances, concerts, art shows, award ceremonies, etc.