

May 28, 2020

Post-COVID Re-integration recommendations:

We hope that this letter finds you well amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, students, faculty, and staff across the state of Texas have been greatly affected by the devastating Coronavirus. The National Association of Social Workers – Texas Chapter and school social workers across this great state are anticipating the reintegration “back-to-school” process. School social workers are well poised to assist students in this transition, and our goal is to make recommendations for best practices for students returning to brick & mortar schooling.

In 2019, Texas started the very necessary endeavor of passing HB 18 and SB 11, which provide parameters for school districts to improve school safety. This includes providing trauma-informed training for teachers. This is an opportunity for school districts to address the effects that COVID-19 is having on students, parents, and school staff. School social workers have extensive training in trauma-sensitive approaches, crisis intervention, and public health concerns, which makes them highly qualified in addressing the needs of students during the reintegration process to traditional schooling. The following recommendations come from a desire for students to be met with trauma-sensitive teaching approaches when they return to school.

1. It is important for school districts to allow time for a debriefing period with and for students who have experienced losses associated with the pandemic. School district employees would also benefit from an opportunity to voice how they have been personally affected by the pandemic.
2. School districts should also be encouraged to provide opportunities for parents, students, teachers, and staff to voice their needs. This is necessary so that school districts will be well aware of the needs of their students, and so that the school social workers can begin to address those needs. It is also recommended that students be provided an opportunity for closure from the previous year since most students did not have a natural transition to the next grade level.
 - a. Review expectations and routines regularly as these are part of the foundations students need to feel secure.
 - b. Provide in-depth, supportive professional development to empower teachers and staff to be emotionally aware and responsive to students and parents.
 - c. Provide in-depth, supportive professional development that addresses mental health self-awareness for teachers and staff.

School social workers should be provided the opportunity to address the mental health needs of students, such as the anxiety associated with returning to a school building, and their emotional needs, such as working through the loss of a loved one, parent, teacher, or friend.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak about the importance of addressing the social-emotional needs of students, parents, faculty, and staff as we begin to prepare for the post-COVID 19 reintegration process.

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