Considerations for reducing risk for COVID-19 and youth anxiety in schools and youth serving organizations
Legal Disclosure:

The Coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing, continuously evolving situation. Northern Light Health encourages everyone to follow federal and state governmental guidance and mandates.

Northern Light Health does not know the particulars of your situation, so the information presented today is general in nature and is based upon Northern Light Health’s own experience, which may or may not apply in your specific situation, and which may be revised as we learn more about the Coronavirus.

Accordingly, following any guidance Northern Light Health presents today in no way guarantees that you, your employees and/or your customers and clients will not contract or spread the Coronavirus.
What Youth Organizations Need to Know to Safely Reopen

Today’s Topics:
1. Risk mitigation in school and childcare settings
2. Strategies for addressing youth anxiety
3. Health literacy
Risk mitigation in school and childcare settings
Comprehensive Plan

• Northern Light Health is here to assist
  • This is a virus and behaves like a virus
  • This situation is both very fluid from a scientific perspective and is highly political
  • We understand different types of businesses have different constituencies to address
• Identify progressive alternatives within each school model
• Define Universal Rules
  • Will everyone be screened and masked?
• Once rules defined determine exceptions
  • Special Ed and younger grades may not tolerate masking
• How much screening and where?
Facility Considerations

- **Traffic control pattern**
- Eliminate cross traffic
- Where to place hand sanitizers
- **Front entrance**
- How to prevent a bottleneck
- **Classroom configurations**
- Tables vs Desks
- How to space students for lunch – classroom / larger room?
- **Special purpose rooms**
- **Bathrooms**
- **Air Flow-Heating and Cooling**
Infection Control Considerations

- Identify High touch items from the perspective of class demographics
- Soft Surfaces
  - Swap carpeting for gym/yoga mats
- Rotate use of items that can not be easily cleaned
  - Books/games
- Adapt cleaning processes to include all high touch items
  - EPA cleaners
  - Using sprays/cloths/foggers
  - Vacuuming-timing and additional considerations
Student/Staff Illness Plans

Have a consistent screening process
Segregation of ill and well students
When to be concerned with sick students
Isolation areas-away from traffic flow-close to exits

Staff Considerations

• Staff may have risk factors making them more susceptible to severe COVID 19 illness
• Contact with students and other staff members

Student Considerations

• Students may not be able to wear masks
• May have to keep on site until picked up by parent
• May not report contacts with other students as accurately

Learn about contact tracing
https://www.cfepublic.com/courses/ihp200rn (coupon code CTFREE)
Strategies for addressing youth anxiety:
Kids, parents, teachers, and mental health
Youth Reactions to COVID-19

Adolescents

• Restless and/or agitated and having difficulty settling down
• Increased frustration, anger, worry, and feelings of being overwhelmed
• Feeling hopeless or helpless
• Teary, sad, and loss of interests
• Fingernail chewing, hair tugging, etc.
• Physical fatigue or other body symptoms, (butterflies in stomach, rapid breathing/heart rate, clenched jaw, etc.)

Younger Children

• Regressive behaviors (baby talk, bed wetting, thumb sucking, not wanting to sleep alone, night light on, chewing and sucking on blankets/clothing)
• Rapidly changing moods
• Sleeplessness or nightmares
• Exaggerated startle responses
• Changes in appetite
• Increases in motor activity
• Skin picking, hair tugging, chewing nails, etc.

The Big Idea: Recognizing stress symptoms helps youth and adults identify when more help is needed.
Strategies for Youth:

- Make time for yourself
- Stay connected with loved ones and trusted friends
- Self-talk strategies
  - “I’m OK!”
  - “What’s the worst thing that can happen right now?”
  - “Who can I talk to?”
  - “It’s OK to feel what I’m feeling.”
- Limit caffeine (soda, coffee, and energy drinks) and sugary snacks
- Identify triggers – “What happened just before I started feeling this way?”
- Distract with a good book, music, or re-watching your favorite TV show or movie
- Find ways to engage in physical activity that is meaningful for you
- Don’t underestimate the positive effects of the sunshine, pets, hobbies, and helping others
Resiliency Strategies for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators

The Big Idea: Parents and caregivers can encourage participation in everyday strategies to build resiliency.

- Problem solve together
- Check in often (provide options for non-verbal check-ins too)
- Be mindful of screen time
- Laugh
- Keep daily routines and a predictable schedule (and make room for youth to have some control here too)
- Practice and play with masks and social distancing
- Focus on self-care and good sleep hygiene
- Allow youth to ask questions and answer with honesty and transparency
- Know when (and who) to reach out for more help
Validating the effects of COVID-19

Grief and Loss Stages (Elisabeth Kubler-Ross)

Denial: Allows us the time to start to adjust to the loss

Anger: May give us a temporary structure to what we're feeling versus feeling lost

Bargaining: “What if” and “If only” thinking while we try for a temporary truce

Depression: Is the appropriate response to loss!

Acceptance: Doesn’t mean you’re “ok” with the loss, just that you’ve accepted the reality

The Big Idea: These stages help us process our grief experience.
The Tasks of Mourning and Importance of Rituals

Mourning is the *external* process of grief. It’s the part of grief that others can see.

J.W. Worden’s model:

- To accept the reality of the loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to life without the deceased
- To maintain a connection to the deceased while moving on with life

The Big Idea: The “deceased” here is the *loss* of normalcy, consistency, predictability, and connectedness brought on by COVID-19.
The Big Idea: Creating and practicing rituals can help our loved ones and ourselves in processing our emotions during COVID-19.
Health literacy: Communicating Science in the Time of COVID-19
Take Home Messages - Specifically for Schools:

• If you are opening for Face to Face (F2F) learning, share the reasons **why** (do the same if you’re not, or if its hybrid)
• Seek feedback and involvement; surveys (what are the struggles in compliance)
• Hold open forums, town halls (discussions, Q&A)
• **School staff, parents and students will need messages tailored to them if plans require new behavioral changes (distancing, masks)**
• And external messaging as well
• Have a communications team, and a communications plan (include healthcare experts)
• Create a centralized repository of **current/dated** guidance online; FAQs

• **Share what precautions are being taken versus what is needed from parents/students**
• Share the science and reasoning behind those requests
• **Continue communication regularly**
• Share reputable resources from experts
• **Better compliance through voluntary buy-in versus strict enforcement**
• use social media/memes, peer messengers/ambassadors, promote critical thinking exercises to bring people to the logical conclusion of risk reduction, etc.

• **Incorporate it into the curriculum!**
Learning from others who communicate controversial science:

- Tailor the message; make it personal
- Avoid jargon – make it accessible
- Listen & ask questions to learn their viewpoint
- Storytelling: have a narrative
- Use analogies, metaphors for complex concepts
Already Informed? How to help those around you in 4 steps

1. Start where you are: be the “nerd node of trust”
2. Pick your battles
   • Reduce the complexity of our judgments
   • Affirm shared values first
3. Avoid repeating misinformation – it inadvertently reinforces it
4. Be as honest and transparent as possible
   • Revise your position as new information comes out
   • Acknowledge the limits of your knowledge
   • Equip your audience with the tools to foster healthy skepticism and to interrogate the process
Final thoughts

• Downplaying a threat is just as bad as overemphasizing it and “crying wolf”
• Keep the message simple and easy to understand; get it out quickly and broadly
• Wait for complex ideas like ‘flattening the curve’, until people are invested in simple ones like ‘wash your hands’
• Chunk the information, so it isn’t overwhelming
• It is ok to emphasize what is not yet known, confirmed, or a clear consensus in the research
Update on testing and screening
Northern Light Health Expert Panelist and University of Maine Collaborator: Use the chat function and ask your questions!
Tools and resources you can use:

https://northernlighthealth.org/Resources/Safe-Return-to-Business

A Plan for Reopening

Healthy Life Resources

- https://northernlighthealth.org/Resources/Safe-Return-to-Business
- Kristy Townsend, Ph.D., Faculty Member, UMaine System COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Board, Lead curator of UMaine’s COVID-19 Science and Medicine Research Bulletins, Kristy.townsend@maine.edu or Ktownsendlab.com

Health Literacy Resources:

- https://umaine.edu/return/umaine-science-and-medicine-updates/

Northern Light Health
For more information or to submit a topic for a future Zoom Conference:

Contact:
Lanie Abbott
Director of Communications
lwabbott@northernlight.org
Join us next Thursday: A Conversation with Dr. Nirav Shah
Legal Disclosure:

The Coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing, continuously evolving situation. Northern Light Health encourages everyone to follow federal and state governmental guidance and mandates.

Northern Light Health does not know the particulars of your situation, so the information presented today is general in nature and is based upon Northern Light Health’s own experience, which may or may not apply in your specific situation, and which may be revised as we learn more about the Coronavirus.

Accordingly, following any guidance Northern Light Health presents today in no way guarantees that you, your employees and/or your customers and clients will not contract or spread the Coronavirus.