


Chelsea Prax

Assistant Director, Children's Health & Well-Being
American Federation of Teachers

 @cr_prax

On the Front Lines: The Provider and Educator Perspective



On The Frontlines: AFT Members' Perspectives

OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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By the numbers

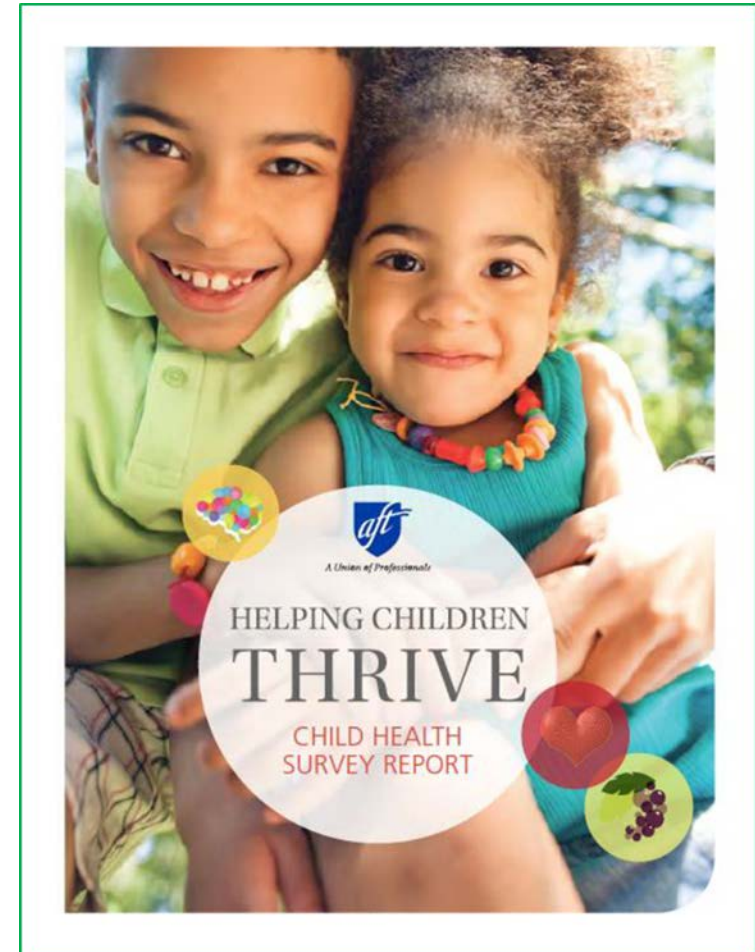
- 2 sectors: education & health
- 5 divisions
- ~3,500 local affiliates
- 1.7 million members



Agenda

A former teacher with an MPH shares ...

- Educators' priorities
- Day-to-day experiences
 - Needs & challenges
 - Questions
 - Secondary trauma
- Supports
 - AFT's work
 - Still needed



Helping Children Thrive: <http://bit.ly/1E0gwai>

Educators' Voices



“Mental health issues continue to rise in younger and younger children, including early childhood.

—Reading recovery teacher, grade 1, Champaign, IL

“Severe mental health issues are alarmingly increasing by leaps and bounds!!!!”

—Teacher, grade 2, Providence, RI

“Many dysfunctional families and mentally/emotionally ill children who don't get the outside help they need. The mental health system in this state is too complicated and limited.”

—K-5 Educator, Pawtucket, RI

“I have several students who struggle with mental/emotional health, as well as some who face hunger on a daily basis. While things like asthma and allergies are also present in my students, they do not have as large of an impact on them as those previously stated.”

—Teacher, grade 4, Morgan Hill, CA

Key Themes

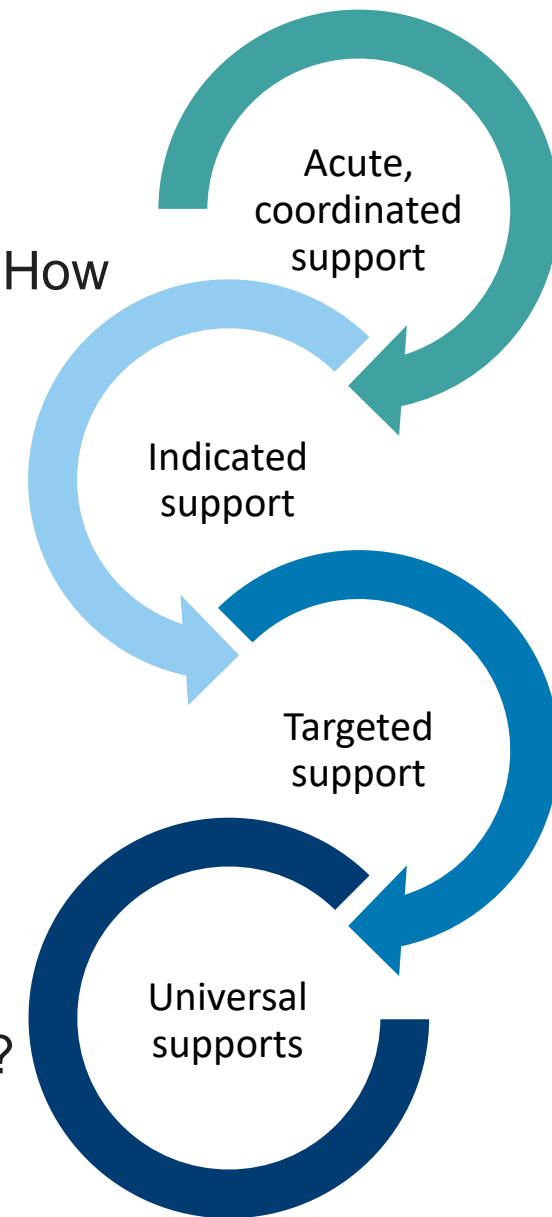
Schools are the nation's de facto pediatric mental health institutions and provide the majority of health services to children in need

- Instructional personnel
 - Identify students' needs
 - Refer to appropriate school staff and community partners (when available)
 - Coordinate relevant care, including through IEP processes
 - Follow-up to make sure the needs are being or have been adequately addressed
- Despite “significantly reducing mental health problems” and helping children connect to supports (Castro, 2018), school personnel are generally dissatisfied with inadequate:
 - Skill development
 - Staffing
 - Student access to outside supports

Questions

The fields of mental health + education need to clarify

- What is the **function** of schools in an ideal pediatric mental health system? How do we transition from here to there?
 - Screening
 - Prevention
 - Universal and/or Tier 1 interventions
 - Whole-family interventions
 - Follow-up
- **Roles and responsibilities**
 - Who should do what?
 - When is it 'my turn?'
- **Capacity demands**
 - How much training is necessary for workers at each tier to be impactful?
 - What is a reasonable scope of work for any given staff person?

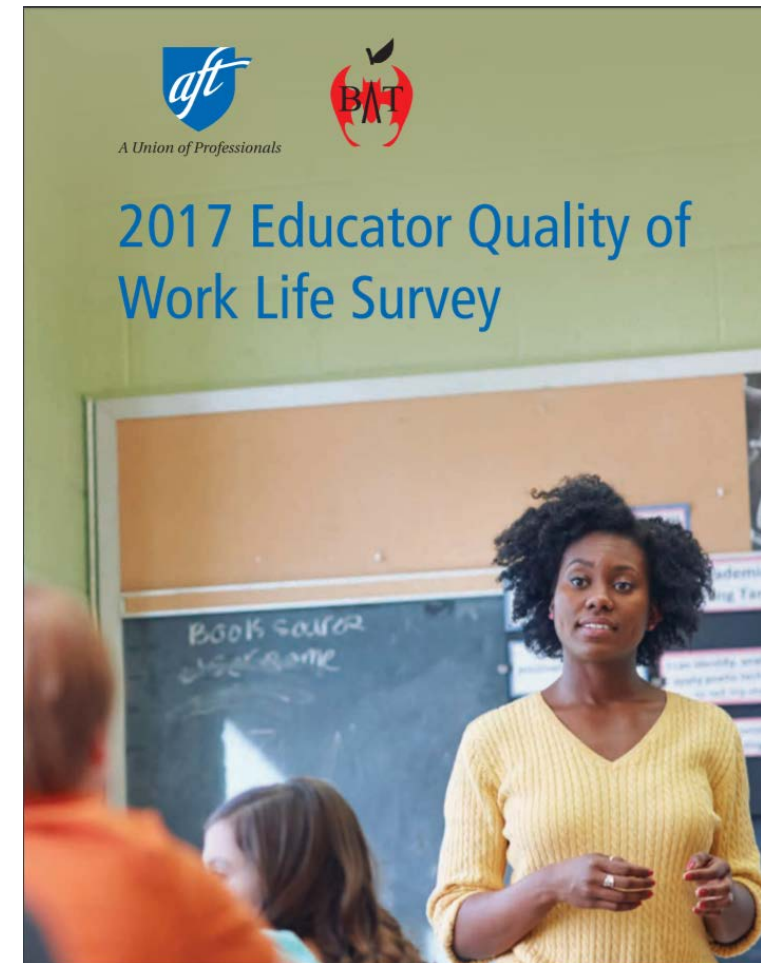


Secondary Trauma & Staff Care

Working in schools is more stressful than many other professions

Compared to national worker samples ...

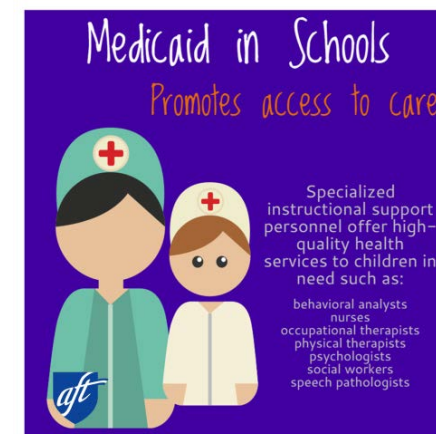
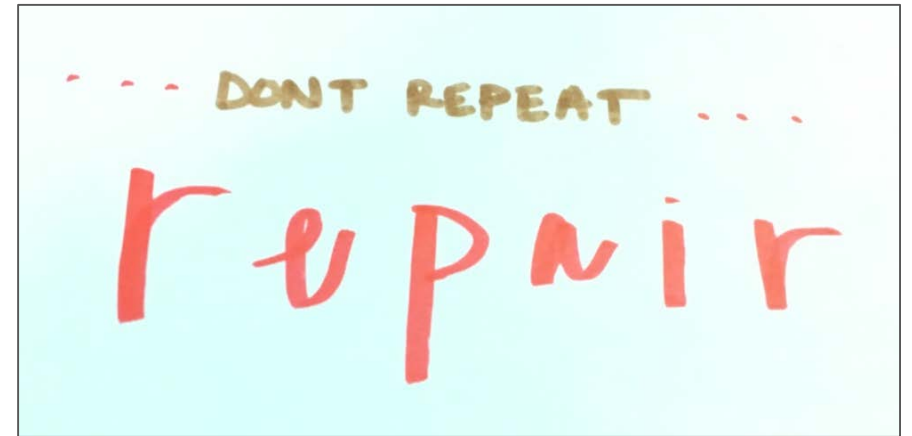
- School personnel report more days of “not good” mental health per month
- School personnel are 1.5x more likely to report their physical health as “fair” or “poor”
- School personnel are more likely to have hypertension, diabetes and prediabetes



2017 EQWL: <http://bit.ly/2zyQVID>

AFT Work ...

- **Promoting staff well-being**
 - Membership benefits, such as student debt clinics
 - Health & safety committees
 - Coalition work to address the role of the union in staff wellness
- **Supporting skill development**
 - Workshops, webinars & printables
 - Training of trainers
- **Supporting robust staffing**
 - Traditional contract negotiation support
 - Medicaid in schools advocacy, research and policy change



Exemplars

St. Paul Federation of Teachers ran a campaign with members and the broader community to abandon a failed suspension/expulsion ban and adopt restorative, trauma-informed practices

- District funds training
- Union funds coordinator
- New positions for support personnel in the contract
- Student and family input
- Participating schools compete for funding and technical assistance
 - Application
 - 75% staff buy-in

Partnership for Resilience (IL) brings together health providers, administrators, educators, university experts and more to implement trauma-informed across participating districts

- Superintendent-union president rollout
- Tailored implementation in each participating school district
- Ridgeland (District 122)
 - Collecting staff satisfaction and ProQOL data over years
 - Training for all teachers, admin, support staff
 - Continuous improvement orientation



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INSTITUTE OF HEALTH POLICY FORUM