



North Jersey Health Collaborative Mental Health Forum: The impact of COVID-19 on the overall mental health of our communities, from an integrated lens

Presented by: Jennifer Carpinteri, LSW
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Hosted by: Laura O'Reilly Stanzilis, RN, MSM
Executive Director, The North Jersey Health Collaborative

Participants begin joining at 11:03am, meeting is called to order at 11:06am, video recording begins at 11:06am. 78 participants were in attendance.

Introduction: Laura O'Reilly Stanzilis reviews the North Jersey Health Collaborative's mission statement, CHIP Action Plan update, and county committees. View up-to-date information on collaborative workgroups, county committee's and CHIP Process on www.njhealthmatters.org . Introduction to Jen Carpinteri.

Presentation: Jen Carpinteri, LSW

Introduction Slide: We are here today to talk about collaboration after COVID. As Laura mentioned, I have a passion for the conversation of COVID and the impact. I am a long-covid survivor, I still work hard on recover. As a family, we've lost my mother-in-law, so when I talk about us coming together as a system to help someone, please understand that I have been that person, me and my family have lived it. I say that to allow you to ask questions, I want today to be very interactive and dynamic, so I'd really like us to talk together and really come away from this today with new collaborations.

Slide 1: We are all sitting here today because when someone is in need, we all want to be a resource, a trusted support person to help. So the age old question is, how do we all work together?

Slide 2: Discussion Points. Mental Health; impact of COVID on mental health & lessons learned; issues, needs, and trends you are seeing within your organization; building new relationships with community providers to meet the needs of clients; how do we as a system work together?

Slide 3: Celebrating mental health awareness month, which has been the month of May since 1949.

Slide 4: We have not had a time in our history, where mental health has been talked about more. This is a time where people are saying mental health is a crisis, and something we need to look at in our children, but in parents and adults as well. ***"Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn't feel***

hard or out of your control. If it does, one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health screening”- Mental Health America at mhascreening.org

Slide 5: Celebrating Mental Health Awareness Month: Caring for our mental health. We need to talk more about mental health. We’ve learned that sharing our lives help us, we need those connections. We’ve also learned that it’s okay to reach out for professional help. We’ve learned that it’s important to talk *loud* about mental health.

Slide 6: We’ve learned (1) to take steps to building resiliency and good mental health (e.g. sleep hygiene, keeping things in perspective, lean into your strengths); (2) how important social connection is to our mental health (e.g. reach out to family and friends, make time to play); (3) how important it is to pay attention to our mental health and to take steps toward good health (e.g. talking to someone, crying, venting) ; (4) when we are under too much stress, we can turn to things that cause us more harm than good (e.g. drinking too much, shopping too much or numbing ourselves with too much social media or news); (5) we need time to grieve all the losses over the past two years (e.g. we need to be with each other, too much social distancing can be isolating)

Slide 7: Trauma is a risk factor for poor mental health. Food and financial stability, healthcare access, lifestyle, lack of sleep, health behaviors, are all also things that determine health. Everyone should have the support needed to thrive.

Slide 8: Losses from COVID-19 do not just need to be people. They could also be employment, routine, regular gatherings, sense of identity, future plans, sense of safety/security, predictability, freedom, control, income, health, physical touch, or traditions.

Slide 9: COVID-19 elicited grief, loss, & difficult emotions: it was a loss of what once was. Common reactions include irritability, +/- in sleep & appetite, questioning faith or religion, forgetfulness, loneliness, disbelief, panic & anxiety, fear, grief, and sadness, feeling dumb, denial, confusion, guilt etc. Grief is rarely just one symptom.

Slide 10: Pandemic Fatigue is Real: Being in a constant state of high alert and uncertainty is exhausting. It is important to talk about the real effect that pandemic fatigue has on us.

Slide 11: Mental health and the COVID-19 Pandemic. 31% of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, 13% reported having started or increased substance use, 26% reported stress-related symptoms, 11% reported having serious thoughts of suicide in the past 30 days. Recent CDC surveys conducted between August 2020 and February 2021 found consistent results with the percentage of adults with recent symptoms of an anxiety or a depressive disorder increased to 41.5%. Thus, the pandemic has raised awareness of mental health, so it is time to stop the stigma of mental health and take care of each other.

Slide 12: Emerging from the pandemic. Signs of normalcy are beginning to emerge, and people are gathering once again. ***But what that normal looks like may not be the same for everyone.***

Slide 13: Let’s discuss from an integrated lens: what are the issues, needs, trends you are seeing within your organization? The need for services is one trend, what are you seeing?

Slide 14: What are the **challenges** your organization is facing to meet the needs of your clients? What has been **successful**?

Slide 15: Let's discuss from an integrated lens: when referring clients to services within other organizations – 1. What are the barriers to access? 2. Is sharing of information a barrier? 3. Lessons learned from those who share information easily.

Slide 16 Have you had to reach out and establish new relationships with community providers to meet the needs of clients? How did that go? When you refer someone to a service provider, do you know if they went? Do you know how it went for them?

Slide 17: How do we as a system stay connected?

Slide 18: 988 Coming Soon: New number to call for people facing mental health crises. Everyone deserves access to the support they need, when they need it. The line will be staffed with trained crisis counselors who know what callers are going through and know what local resources might make a difference.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:00pm