

M3 Blog

Making Student and Staff Health a Priority

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The educational ecosystem is made up of many moving parts: staff, students, administration, coaches... the list goes on and on. We recognize this, and yet, when it comes to mental and physical health, we have tended to focus mainly on the “student” part of that equation.

Many of you are likely familiar with Jamie Vollmer’s “**list.**” This three page list is admittedly not all-inclusive, but makes the increasing number of responsibilities that schools and staff have taken on with regard to the education of our children very clear. It’s no wonder that our schools are feeling the burden and the overall health of our staff and students is an ongoing concern.

We know that basic needs must first be met before students can excel in academics or even social aspects of school. Why shouldn’t this concept apply to all members of our community?

CURRENT STATE OF STUDENT AND STAFF HEALTH

The current state of student and staff health is alarming. The rising trend in mental health diagnoses, injury, and stress-induced illness in students and staff is a risk not only for your coverages, but also for your schools.

Student health

A primary risk management concern for schools is student mental and physical health and wellbeing. In this area, there are a few trends to keep an eye on:

- **9 million children aged 3-17 have been diagnosed with depression.**
- **4 million children aged 3-17 have been diagnosed with**

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- **Schoolyard injuries are common, and we need to implement audits to prevent further risk. About 75% of nonfatal injuries related to playground equipment occur at schools and daycare centers.**

Staff health

Educators are dealing with more demands than ever in the classroom, both physically and mentally. Teachers are not only tasked with providing a safe space for children to learn, they are expected to do so under increased public pressure and, at times, even under assault from their students. The increased stress that teachers encounter on a daily basis is leading to burnout and churn within the profession.

- **The educational sector is ranked the fifth highest in work-related violence out of any industry.**
- **In a recent study, workers' compensation data showed that student-related injuries made up 26% of claims, and 8.6% of those injuries resulted in time away from work.**
- **78% of teachers report feeling physically and emotionally exhausted at the end of the day.**
- **44% of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years.**

HOW TO MAKE STUDENT AND STAFF HEALTH A PRIORITY

As an educational leader, my vision has always been to provide the necessary support and resources to help our staff and students live a healthy and successful life. Each year this becomes more complex as we consider how to keep our employees and students safe and avoid injury, how to equip our staff to best handle the stress of being an educator and the challenge of compassion fatigue, and how to prioritize and incorporate the increasing demands on educators in a way that makes sense for students, staff, families and our communities.

Safe facilities

Students and staff should feel like school is a safe place to learn and teach. They have simply already have enough to

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Consider the safety of your schools. Do you meet or exceed safety requirements in your facilities and on your playgrounds or outdoor spaces? Are there policies that you can put in place to make these places safer?

Reducing risk in these areas should be a no-brainer – low-hanging fruit, if you will. Simply by updating your facilities so that they live up to current regulations and trends in the educational property space, you'll set yourself up for increased success.

Wellness programs

Bringing wellness to the workplace takes the responsibility off of employees to find mental and physical health services on their own, and allows you to mitigate risks before they become an issue. Today's wellness programs go beyond offering fitness classes or monitoring BMI – they're genuinely holistic.

Modern wellness programs can dive into nutrition, offer mental health support, educate employees on health care consumerism, and even broach topics such as financial wellness to take off some of the stress associated with the education sector.

Before helping to implement a wellness program, M3 likes to conduct a population health analysis in order to determine key areas for improvement within your district. Then, we create a customized program that fits your school and your staff.

Telemedicine

Telemedicine is making its way into the behavioral health space. Coupled with onsite behavioral health professionals from health care providers in our schools, we are providing greater access to behavioral health resources than ever before – even during a time of a shortage of providers in the systems. Partnerships with local provider systems, Employee Assistance Programs, state and county resources – and implementing targeted use of these resources – have provided opportunities to innovate and provide access to both our students and our staff.

Active shooter training

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Active shooter situations have become an all too common reality, particularly for educators. Providing your staff with the knowledge and preparation to take action if a crisis hits through dedicated training could help relieve mental stress related to this dire situation. M3 sees this as an integral part of educator and student safety, and a potential risk. Accordingly, we employ an **active shooter specialist** who can assist with trainings for your school.

IN SUMMARY

The wellbeing of your students and your staff are intricately intertwined, and must be treated as a holistic risk management opportunity in your schools. Use the tips above to get started, and contact a member of the **M3's Education & Government practice group** to learn more about how we can partner with you to prioritize the health of your staff and students.

Have Questions? Ask Us:

*Name **

*Phone **

*Email **

*Questions **

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Bec serves as a subject matter expert, strategist, and thought leader for M3's education and government practice. She shares information on trends and issues that specifically impact the employee benefits of M3's public sector clients.

TAGS

***Data Analysis, Education & Government, Employee Benefits,
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