The Recovery Efforts in Newtown: Real Lessons Learned

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ABOUT CLIFFORD BEERS

- Founded in 1913 by New Haven resident Clifford W. Beers
- Offers programs/services to over 5500 children and families annually
- Convenient, effective care
  - clinic-based; school and community-based; home-based
- Affiliate member of the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network
- Engaging everyone (schools, lawmakers, providers, child-focused organizations) to adopt trauma-informed practices
  - moving from What’s wrong with this child? to What happened to this child?

MOVING FORWARD
Facts about the Sandy Hook tragedy

- Friday, December 14, 2012
- Timeline of the tragedy
- Twenty 1st graders and six educators were killed
- All students and staff were evacuated to nearby Sandy Hook Firehouse
- The school was demolished in 2014 and re-built in 2016
Immediate Response - first 6 months

Following School Years

Today
Multi-Level Intervention Options

**Tier 1 – General Population-based Interventions**
- Psychoeducation, resiliency-based
- Psychological First Aid

**Tier 2 – Specialized Interventions**
- Trauma/Grief-focused, short-term, strength-based
- SPR, CBITS, TF-CBT, CFTSI

**Tier 3 – Specialized Community-Based Interventions**
- Psychiatric services, long-term treatment
## Key Elements of our Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Support</th>
<th>Staff Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigned Clinician by grade level</td>
<td>Access to all staff communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible Referral plan</td>
<td>Before, During and After school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening and Assessment</td>
<td>Access to a floating substitute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Tx and Parent Support</td>
<td>Psychoeducation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Tiered Group Plan</td>
<td>Wellness Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher conferences</td>
<td>Community Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Collaboration</td>
<td>Safeguard staff confidentiality</td>
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The first six months

- Joined recovery efforts at the Sandy Hook School in January
  - Embedded in one specific classroom
- Identified two more clinicians – for student and staff support by March
- Joint planning with the DBHRN team for their exit
- Partnership with Yale Trauma Center until the end of that school year
Other Considerations

- Victim family and survivor family support
- Management of communication and the media
- Handling of donations (monetary and other)
- Collaboration with other similarly impacted communities
- Development of the Newtown - Sandy Hook Community Foundation
Sandy Hook Recovery Team

- The mission of the Sandy Hook Recovery team is to mobilize and support the Sandy Hook community to recover and thrive

- Public health/ multi-tiered models of intervention to recovery from trauma
Services Provided for Students

• Crisis intervention
• Trauma-focused assessment and supports
• Teacher consultation and classroom observation
• Individual student sessions
• Parent consultation and supports
• Classroom wide activities
• School-based group services
• Referral for outside services
Year 1 – Whole School Approach

- Embedded in the fabric of Sandy Hook School
- Services broadly available
- Clinicians assigned by grade level
- Flexible referral/identification process
- Formalized screening process (CPSS and UCLA PTSD RI)
- Individual treatment
- Parent support
- Group intervention
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trauma Symptoms</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxious/ nervous/ jumpy</td>
<td>68%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty sleeping</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritable or grouchy</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty Concentrating</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits of Anger</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clingy or worried about separation</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed/ upset or sad</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intrusive thoughts</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic complaints</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
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Year 1— Support for Staff

- Embedded in the fabric of Sandy Hook School
- Schedule flexibility
- Safeguards staff confidentiality
- Promotes professional success
- Individual consultation and intervention
- Group based supports and wellness activities
- Referral and linkage to external supports
Year 2- Student Specific

- Transition from a whole school to child specific
- Sandy Hook and Reed Intermediate School
- Partnership with District Recovery Director
- Trauma screening and assessment continues
- Two-tiered group plan
- CBITS/ BounceBack! broadly implemented
- Social skills/ lunch bunch groups
- Parent consultation and support
Year 2- Staff support

- Staff support only at Sandy Hook School
- Professional strategies to mitigate the effects of trauma and promote resiliency
- Wellness activities (mindfulness / in-school Weight Watchers)
- Assist staff with processing next steps professionally
- Transition of staff support clinician
Year 3

- Sandy Hook School only
- Reduced staffing
- New referrals still identified
- Robust group intervention plan
- Parent forums
- Transition planning and letting go of the former 1st grade class
- Further redefining staff support with multiple agency involvement
Year 4

• New funding identified
• Move back to Sandy Hook campus
  • Sandy Hook School open house events
• New referrals still identified
  • Increased service to younger siblings now entering the school
• Shift away from EBP groups to mindfulness groups
• Staff support continues
• Planning for the anniversary on the same campus as the shooting
Year 5

• Sandy Hook School only
• Consultation as needed to other schools
• New referrals still identified
• Reduced staffing - no longer providing staff support
• Planning for milestone anniversary – 5th year
• Next SY and considering our exit
Year 6- current school year

- Transition to the middle school
  - Re-connecting with the former 1st graders
- Consultation to other schools as needed
- New referrals still identified
- Planning for Clifford Beers exit and district staffing
Significant Events

• Re-location to Monroe (January 2013)
• New school leadership (Summer 2013)
• Bomb threat (October 2014)
• Anniversary response planning for each year
• Untimely death of a student (February 2015)
• Transition back to Sandy Hook campus (August 2016)
• Re-connecting with the most impacted class (August 2018)
• Impact of other school shootings
Supervising the Recovery Team

• Staff selection
• Routine contact
  • Use of technology for check-in’s with staff
• Don’t forget the basics (supplies, IT, schedule, school calendar)
• Respect the “insider/outsider” dynamics
• Remaining flexible, adaptive and available
• Importance of on-site team support
• Pay attention to secondary traumatic stress
Lessons learned ... and still learning.

- Build relationships
- Communication
- Trauma education logistics
- Logistics and measuring impact
- Sensitivity to trauma triggers and anniversary preparation
- Managing team wellness, transitions and departures
- Capacity building and sustainability planning
Resources

• Trauma/Grief resources: www.NCTSN.org

• Web resources
  • PFA Online: http://learn.nctsn.or
  • CBITS: www.cbits.org
  • TFCBT: www.tfcbt.musc.edu
  • Helping Heroes: www.helping-heroes.org

• Mobile apps (Apple & Android versions)
  • PFA Mobile
  • Sesame Street
  • PTSD Coach