

“The Kids We Lose”

ZOOM CHAT DISCUSSION

Questions developed and asked by Cori McFarlane, Deputy Director of Door County Department of Health and Human Services.

Question #1: *Each year in Wisconsin, 5701 kids are secluded or restrained in schools (18,341 incidents). 82% of these are children with disabilities; 59,868 are suspended for behavior issues; and 8460 minors are arrested at school. What’s your reaction to these statistics?*

Responses:

Jennifer Moeller: I'm saddened.

Melissa X: sad, to say the least

Kathy Schultz: Heartbreaking.

Kris Miller: the status quo is not working

Jennifer Moeller: SO many kids not getting the help they need, and now these parents not getting the help they need

Sarah Purzycki: The behaviors don't change if you lock them up or restrain them, their system is not getting to the root of the problem.

Question #2: *Do you think these punitive approaches happen in our community?*

Responses:

Kris Miller: yes

Anna Zahorik: I can think of a group home that used these tactics

Sarah Purzycki: They do in Milwaukee every day.

Dori Goddard: Absolutely happens here

Melissa X: absolutely, Cori!

Question #3: *For school year 2019-20, DPI data for Door County Schools shows a total of 150 incidents resulting in 150 out of school suspensions and 1 expulsion. Also in 2019-20, our schools reported 11 seclusion incidents involving 2 students. 1 of the 2 is a child with disabilities. And we had 16 restraint incidents involving 4 students, 3 of whom had a disability.*

Responses:

Anna Zahorik: It's sad to hear, but I'm glad we're addressing our approach and talking about change.

Sydney Tlachac: Wow.

Robin Lambrecht: how traumatic for the kids

Sarah Purzycki: That's horrifying!

Jennifer Moeller: worse than most jails

Melissa X: this is upsetting, I can't imagine what I would do if I received a call that my child was put in seclusion, or restraints

Question #4: *How might approaches change if we did a better job of educating parents, providers, educators - and youth - about the impact of adverse childhood experiences on brain development?*

Responses:

Anna Zahorik: It's like dementia, they would better understand that the brain literally can't do the tasks that they are requesting of them.

Cori McFarlane: Great analogy, Anna!

Jennifer Moeller: YES!

Sarah Purzycki: I think all school staff need to be trained in Trauma Informed Care every school year.

Melissa X: there would be more empathy, and approaches would be solution focused and conducive to the child and their individual needs, instead of traumatic

Kris Miller: An understanding and appreciation of ACEs provides a good starting point that needs to be followed with learning different, appropriate, compassionate and evidence based action steps that recognize the behavior is just the sign of the real problem, not the problem itself

Cori McFarlane: Great point, Kris. Learning specific actions and alternative interventions is key.

Question #5: *What evidence have you seen in your role that consequence-based approaches don't have the desired effect of modifying behaviors?*

Responses:

Melissa X: the behaviors increase!

Kathy Schultz: These images of restraint and seclusion are horrifying. I would guess most educators, at least in Door County, are not comfortable with having to use such measures, but they don't yet have the TIC knowledge and other more informed measures available to them. So glad Southern Door is starting to change their approaches.

Melissa X: I also believe the UCLA to assess for trauma can be helpful alongside ACEs.

Cori McFarlane: Yes, Melissa! (This is a component of Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy, an approach some of our DHHS therapists are trained to use.)

Question #6: *What are your thoughts about use of medications to manage behaviors? Can they be helpful? Can they be another form of restraint?*

Responses:

Anna Zahorik: I think it depends on the dosage and kind of med.

Jennifer Moeller: Medications may have a place for some. But there needs to be other work all the way around.

Jennifer Moeller: for most based on these statistics

Robin Lambrecht: I think they can be helpful in some situations...however I don't like to see when the child is so medicated they are now like a zombie with no emotion

Anna Zahorik: I agree

Sarah Purzycki: For children with ADHD it can be very successful in helping them to focus, but if the medications aren't working then it is likely not ADHD but rather trauma which looks very similar.

Sydney Tlachac: I think medications are situational dependent, hopefully they are being utilized in combination with our behavior supports, such as CBT as well.

Cori McFarlane: Great point, Sarah! Yes!

Cori McFarlane: Sydney, I agree.

Sydney Tlachac: training in de-escalation is so important.

Sarah Purzycki: I thought that was illegal!

Question #7: *In what situations, if any, should punishment or negative consequences (other than corporal punishment.... yikes!) be used to address behaviors?*

Responses:

Kathy Schultz: IMO Spanking and hitting a child teaches them that hitting is how you solve problems.

Anna Zahorik: I feel like punishment might be necessary if they are hurting other kids in the classroom, but I agree hitting/paddling isn't the right punishment

Katie Moore: Something that always sticks with me is the understanding so many have of "discipline"; that it's a consequence or punishment that usually has a negative connotation or sense of power from the authority figure....and not considering the root of the word being to teach or to train.... corporal punishment is certainly not teaching anything or creating any positive/productive outcomes

Cori McFarlane: Thanks for that, Katie.

Kathy Schultz: I agree Katie!

Cori McFarlane: Fight, flight or freeze!

Question #8: **What are some examples you've seen of collaborative approaches (partnering with the child to teach skills and find solutions)? What outcomes did these approaches produce?**

Sydney Tlachac: I have found reframing conflict to be helpful when working with children. It often helps them see the situation from the perspective of the other child they may have been in a conflict with.

Question #9: **What about mentoring? Any examples of that here?**

Responses:

Cori McFarlane: Well, here's one example that I think of: The Youth Connection Center. Since starting the YCC, we have virtually eliminated the use of secure (locked) detention facilities for youth. (2018: 117 days, 2019: 92 days, 2020: 76 days, 2021 YTD: 0 days).

Shauna Blackledge: Not an adult mentoring example, but it sounds like "problem kids" fair better when they have the example set by the kids who are behaving. They showed that putting all of the kids with behavior issues together leads to them feeding off one another. "Problem kids" need student role models.

Kathy Schultz: The YYC staff are amazing! So glad we have this option in Door County!

Kathy Schultz: Yes!

Katie Moore: Those numbers are amazing Cori

Cori McFarlane: Agree, Shauna - need to explore more use of youth peer supports, maybe older kids mentoring younger kids.

Cori McFarlane: CCS and CST links providers with kids and parents to help teach skills.

Kathy Schultz: The YCC kids are learning from each other and building self-confidence by having opportunities to take on positive leadership roles too.

Cori McFarlane: Family Services SELF program. Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Boys and Girls Club....

Katie Moore: Kathy and I were at a CCS team meeting last week where there were 10 team members present; school, skills, family, providers-----awesome teaming and the child has made some great progress....and/(but?) it's taken a LOT of time and collaboration to get to this point. While there is a lot of education needed (system wide) to take the proactive approach, it seems so much more feasible than being reactive with all the supports that often need to be brought in.

Cori McFarlane: Awesome example, Katie!

Question #10 Any thoughts on how the lessons of this film be applied to parents? To teachers? To your particular agency?

Responses:

Kris Miller: If you're interested in learning more about the model Southern Door is implementing, I encourage you to explore livesinthebalance.org It offers a complete paradigm shift in how educators and parents approach children with behavior challenges

Cori McFarlane: Thanks, Kris! We'll include that link along with the link to this video in our follow-up.

Cori McFarlane: I also wanted to share this - Our Youth Justice team has dramatically reduced the number of youth referred for formal court intervention (2018: 33, 2019: 25, 2020: 12, 2021 YTD: 5). Instead, we use informal dispositions (deferred prosecution agreements) and alternative means to address problem behaviors – YCC, youth diversion program, case management, community service, referral for services and supports – much more of a restorative justice approach.

Cori McFarlane: And we have our new Youth Diversion program for lower level offenses. Big focus in our state on not "overserving" youth offenders, as doing so can actually make the problem worse.

Kathy Schultz: The conversation we had at Southern Door last week using this new collaborative approach was amazing. The team identified such wonderful progress in the youth and empowered his mom, I believe also giving her hope. Thanks so much for sharing this program Kris. Some kids have difficulties in many areas, but by working together, we can identify the lagging skills and unsolved problems and WITH the youth, help them learn new skills while also focusing on their strengths.

Cori McFarlane: Good to know, Kathy! Thanks. I believe there are many positive interventions already used in our community, but there's always more that can be done. Any other new ideas that the film prompt for you?

Cori McFarlane: Oh, this also makes me think of the Raising a Thinking Child parenting program and corresponding I Can Problem Solve for kids!

Kris Miller: I learned in the training that this model can be used successfully with nonverbal children and even children as young as 2. It's all about talking and listening

Magda Gutierrez: I have to go. Thank you so much for the movie. I am officially traumatized by some of the cases. I do think that law enforcement and this school district really needs to get this type of training. Thanks again.

“The Kids We Lose”

KEY TAKE-A-WAYS AND RESOURCES

Take-a-ways:

There were MANY wonderful ideas and thoughts shared during the chat session so please do read over it. Here are a couple of items that stand out

- Restraint and seclusion is being used in Door County Schools. The good news is there is some recognition and discussion around the need for a change in response to children lacking emotional regulation skills. Service providers are offering education, mentoring and tools to parents and children in different modalities to reduce the prevalence of dangerous behaviors exhibited by our resident children.
 - Since starting the YCC, we have virtually eliminated the use of secure (locked) detention facilities for Door County youth.
 - Our Youth Justice team has dramatically reduced the number of youth referred for formal court intervention. Instead, deferred prosecution agreements and alternative means to address problem behaviors are used. Such as; YCC, youth diversion program, case management, community service, referral for services and supports
 - Southern Door is using the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model.
 - Katie Moore and Kathy Schultz shared that during a [Comprehensive Community Services](#) (CCS) team meeting last week that using this new collaborative approach was amazing. The team identified such wonderful progress in the youth and empowered his mom, I believe also giving her hope. It's taken a LOT of time and collaboration to get to this point. While there is a lot of education needed (system wide) to take the proactive approach, it seems so much more feasible than being reactive with all the supports that often need to be brought in
- An understanding of ACES and how trauma affects a person in many ways (physical, emotionally and spiritually) is so important. Kris Miller summed it up very well, “An understanding and appreciation of ACEs provides a good starting point that needs to be followed with learning different, appropriate, compassionate and evidence based action steps that recognize the behavior is just the sign of the real problem, not the problem itself”

Resources:

- View and/or share with others: “The Kids We Lose” film - <https://www.thekidswelose.com/>
- *Lives in the Balance* website: <https://livesinthebalance.org/> Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model
- Door County Partnership for Children and Families – “Raising a Thinking Child” class. Classes are offered virtually FREE of charge to Door County families. The next session starts October 7th. The registration deadline is this **Thursday, September 30, 2021**. Register here: <https://doorcountyparents.com/rtc-signup/> We may be able to accommodate late registration if the class is not full. Contact Chad Welch at 920-421-3146. Information on the course can be found here: <https://doorcountyparents.com/raising-a-thinking-child/>