Promoting Connectedness for Trauma and Suicide Prevention

Needs and Opportunities to Address Social Isolation During a Pandemic

December 8, 2020
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Polling Question: Who is in the audience today?

A. City/county government
B. CBO/nonprofit
C. K-12 education
D. College/university
E. Funder/foundation
F. Healthcare
G. State or federal government
H. Tribal organization
I. Faith-based organization
J. Other/not applicable
Promoting Connectedness for Trauma and Suicide Prevention

Needs and Opportunities to Address Social Isolation During a Pandemic

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Text Chat Question: What is one source of connection in your community during the COVID-19 pandemic?
Objectives

• Describe the importance of social connection for preventing trauma and suicide amidst the pandemic.

• Explore how agencies and organizations have adapted their efforts to support social connection among different populations.

• Identify roles for local leaders, including local government and community-based organizations, in supporting wellbeing.

• Discuss opportunities for long-term recovery and systems change that supports social connection across diverse populations.
Evidence points to a significant portion of the American population as socially disconnected in some way.

Social isolation increases families’ risk of exposure to ACEs.

Social isolation and ACEs are risk factors for suicide.


Barriers to engaging with others

- Transportation issues
- Long-term illness
- Exposure to domestic or community violence
- Disabilities
- Unemployment

More than seven in 10 adults agree that the pandemic has made it more difficult for them to connect with friends.

Thinking about your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The pandemic has made it more difficult for me to connect with friends. (N=2,010)
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, two thirds of adults report having experienced social isolation, and around the same amount also reports that a loved one has experienced social isolation as well.

- **A loved one**
  - Strongly experienced: 26%
  - Somewhat experienced: 41%
  - Haven't experienced much: 21%
  - Haven't experienced at all: 12%

- **Myself**
  - Strongly experienced: 24%
  - Somewhat experienced: 42%
  - Haven't experienced much: 21%
  - Haven't experienced at all: 12%

Thinking about the definition of social isolation that you just read, to what extent have you or a loved one experienced social isolation since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic? (N=2,010)
Social Connection: A Key Strategy to Prevent Suicide

Promote Connectedness

- Peer norm programs
- Community engagement activities
Social Connection: A Key Strategy to Prevent ACEs

Connect Youth to Caring Adults and Activities

- Mentoring programs
- After-school programs
COVID-19: Physically Distant, Socially Connected

Physical distance with social isolation ➔ Physical distance with a widening social circle

Lost Sense of Connection ➔ Connection
Anxiety and Fear ➔ Seek and offer support
Stress ➔ Listening
Resource Sharing ➔ Compassion

#VillageInMind
Guests

Edward Garcia
Co-Director, CESIL

Tony Diaz
Senior Program Director
After School Matters

Emily Allen
Senior Vice President of Programs, AARP Foundation

Kris Bifulco
Connect Postvention Coordinator, AOCMHP

Annette Marcus
Suicide Prevention Policy Manager, AOCMHP
Edward Garcia

Co-Director

Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness

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What is Social Isolation and Loneliness? What are the differences?

Social isolation

A state in which the individual lacks a sense of belonging socially, lacks engagement with others, has a minimal number of social contacts and they are deficient in fulfilling and quality relationships.¹

Loneliness

• Can occur in the presence or absence of social isolation.
• Some early definitions characterized it as a lack of social intimacy or as a deficiency in social relationships.
• Often described as a subjective feeling of isolation, not belonging, or lacking companionship.²

Our Mission
To engage diverse stakeholders, promote innovative research, and advocate for policy change that combats the adverse consequences of social isolation and loneliness and advances approaches that improve social connectedness for Americans.

Our Vision
For all Americans to have the opportunities and supports necessary to be socially engaged in society.

Our Members
Stakeholders include: Consumers, health Plans, health systems, providers, employers, community-based organizations, non-medical organizations and entities, etc.
Scientific Advisory Council

Convening to develop a set of principles and criteria for meaningful intervention.

Innovation Network

A forum committed to acting as a cross-sector incubator for Social Isolation & Loneliness intervention development.
Coalition Policy Goals

Increase public awareness for social isolation and loneliness and its effect on health and wellbeing

Enhance social services and supports to address social isolation and loneliness

Advance health services and supports that address social isolation and loneliness

Leverage innovative technology solutions that foster connection and social integration

Advance research to develop the evidence base necessary to design effective programs and policies
Real Time Adaptations to Support Connection: 
A Shift to Virtual

Pyx Health

MEALS on WHEELS AMERICA

papa
Edward Garcia

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Text chat question: What types of actions have you taken to support social connectedness in your community amidst the pandemic?
Kris Bifulco
Connect Postvention Coordinator
Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs

Annette Marcus
Suicide Prevention Policy Manager
Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide
LGBTQ+ Minigrant Program

**Purpose:** to provide a low-barrier process for community organizations to receive funds to assist and uplift marginalized people as an approach to suicide and ACES prevention

Excerpt from program logic model:

- **Activities:**
  - Community of practice
  - Implement projects
  - Technical assistance
  - Evaluation

- **Short-term outcome:**
  - Decreased social isolation through relationship development

- **Intermediate outcomes:**
  - Increased social connection
  - Recommendations for future emergencies and resiliency

- **Project impact:**
  - Prevent suicide among LGBTQ+ youth
**Process**

- **Funding**: Oregon Health Authority – Public Health and Health Services Division obtains SAMSHA funding.
- **Design**: LGBTQ Advisory of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide provides advice on designing mini-grant process and priorities.
- **Contracting**: Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs is contracted to administer mini-grants.
- **Staffing**: Trauma Informed Oregon and AOCMHP/Alliance staff support the project.
The Application

“We encourage organizations and community groups who have not previously focused specifically on suicide prevention work to consider applying. Applications for small projects and out-of-the-box ideas are welcome.”

• **Criteria:**
  • Increases protective factors for the LGBTQ+ community
  • Commitment to racial equity
  • Creative collaboration with local partners
  • Trauma-informed
  • COVID-responsive

• Priority given to historically under-resourced communities such as BIPOC, disabled, rural and frontier
Grantees by location

4 have statewide reach

60% of Oregon’s population is in the Portland-Metro Area (Multnomah County)

- 25% of all applications from Multnomah
- 30% of all grantees from Multnomah
HIV Alliance and TransPonder are honored to offer support to trans/gender diverse Oregonians during this critical time. Our Eugene-Springfield community has experienced so much trauma over the last months. With wildfires now displacing many in our community and burning through our cities' backyard, the need to come together is more important than ever.

HIV Alliance, microgrant recipient
Project Partners

Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide
Hope • Help • Healing

Oregon Health Authority

ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

trauma informed oregon
Tony Diaz
Senior Program Director
www.afterschoolmatters.org
About After School Matters

After School Matters® is a non-profit organization that provides after-school and summer programs in the arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM to approximately 20,000 Chicago high school teens each year.

Reach and Impact

A Look at ASM Teen Demographics:

• 54% Black/African American; 34% Hispanic/Latinx; 5% Asian; 4% White
• 59% Female; 39% Male; 2% Other/Did Not Answer

High School Impact Compared to Non-Participating Peers:

• Higher Freshmen On-Track Rate
• Better School Day Attendance Rate
• Higher Graduation Rate

Our Teens Develop 21st Century Skills

- Leadership: Pre-Survey 59%, Post-Survey 79%
- Collaboration: Pre-Survey 68%, Post-Survey 87%
- Problem-Solving: Pre-Survey 61%, Post-Survey 84%
- Public Speaking: Pre-Survey 51%, Post-Survey 76%
- Planning for Success: Pre-Survey 65%, Post-Survey 87%

Quotes:

91% “My instructor shows concern for their well-being.”
92% “I feel safe in my program.”
85% “Other teens in my program make me feel like I belong.”
COVID-19 Response

After School Matters re-envisioned programs to provide safe, equitable and innovative remote learning opportunities during the pandemic for 10,000 Chicago teens in summer 2020, build bridges across the city, and increased accessibility.

Summer 2020 By the Numbers

- **120,000+** meals distributed
- **10,000** teens participated
- **5,000** supply packets delivered
- **1,100** devices provided
- **500** Google classrooms
- **139** partner organizations
- **90%** daily attendance rate
- **79%** of teens surveyed felt more hopeful about the future after completing programming
- **74%** of teens surveyed used their stipend to help pay for necessities or help support their family
After School Matters focused on 3 priority areas:

- **Program Continuity**
  - Quickly reorganized to provide remote learning programs for the first time starting with the Spring 2020 program session

- **Financial Assistance**
  - Continued paying teens and instructors through the spring (even during program pause) and summer sessions
  - These funds meant millions of dollars going back into the communities we serve

- **Additional and Critical Support Services**
  - Relieving Food Insecurity
  - Closing the Digital Divide
  - Providing Mental Health Support in Partnership with Adler University
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Text chat question: Who are some partners that you’re working with to promote connectedness?
Emily Allen
Senior Vice President of Programs
AARP Foundation
About AARP Foundation

AARP Foundation works to end senior poverty by helping vulnerable older adults build economic opportunity and social connectedness.

As AARP’s charitable affiliate, we serve AARP members and nonmembers alike. Bolstered by vigorous legal advocacy, we spark bold, innovative solutions that foster resilience, strengthen communities and restore hope.

**Increasing Economic Opportunity**
Empowering low-income older adults with the skills and resources to increase their financial stability and overcome existing or future challenges.

**Increasing Social Connectedness**
Humans need connection. That’s why we’re exploring creative ways to help older adults connect and stay connected — to each other and to their communities.
Social isolation affects nearly 1 in 5 older adults.
Isolation is a health issue.

Research shows that the negative health effects of chronic isolation and loneliness, while harmful at any age, are especially dangerous for people over 50. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with:

- Higher blood pressure
- Increased susceptibility to the flu
- Greater risk of heart disease
- Earlier onset of dementia

Social isolation among older adults is associated with an estimated $6.7 billion in additional Medicare spending annually.
Connect2Affect features tools and resources to help evaluate isolation risk, reach out to others who may be feeling lonely and disconnected, and find practical ways to reconnect to the community.

- Increase social connectedness by addressing the root causes of social isolation through a **consumer portal** of curated evidence-based content and activities.

- An easy-to-use **online assessment** and content that offers **recommendations for programs, activities and resources** that can help users connect to others and engage in the community, based on their individual needs, interests, and abilities.

- A center of excellence and **clearinghouse of best practices and evidence based solutions** to address social isolation.
**Connect2Affect Version 2.0 Launch**
Web traffic has **increased 50%** year-over-year and assessment completions have doubled in the last year. **Over 100,000** individual assessments have been completed since the feature launched in 2017.

**March**

**Connect2Affect Chatbot Launch**
127,872 individuals have initiated conversation over text.

**October**

**Social Check-In Voice Skill Promotion Begins**

5 out of 5 stars customer reviews on Amazon Marketplace

“Alexa, launch Social Check-In.”
“Hey Google, launch Social Check-In.”
Recent Research

The Pandemic Effect: A Social Isolation Report

October 6, 2020

AARP Foundation
United Health Foundation

This report explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adults of all ages, to understand levels of social isolation during the pandemic, and to assess knowledge of how social isolation can impact a person's health.

Funded by AARP Foundation with the support of a grant from United Health Foundation.

AARP FOUNDATION

Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Opportunities for the Health Care System

The health care system is poised to develop methods that identify social isolation and loneliness in health care settings.

How health care providers can help reduce the adverse health impacts of social isolation and loneliness.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
Text chat question: What are some resources you’ve found helpful to promote connectedness during the pandemic?
Building a National Network
Coming Together

Edward Garcia
Co-Director, CESIL

Kris Bifulco
Connect Postvention Coordinator, AOCMHP

Tony Diaz
Senior Program Director After School Matters

Annette Marcus
Suicide Prevention Policy Manager, AOCMHP

Emily Allen
Senior Vice President of Programs, AARP Foundation
Text Chat Question: What would be most helpful to you in terms of next steps?
Resources
CDC Technical Packages

[Image of two publications:
- Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices
- Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Leveraging the Best Available Evidence]

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/communicationresources/pub/technical-packages.html
RWJF Community Grantees
Adapting Social Connection Strategies from Abroad

Webinar Recording: Solutions for Social Isolation

Oswaldo Mestre, Jr. of the City of Buffalo, Stephanie Allen of United Way of Mat-Su (Alaska), and RWJF Director Karabi Acharya, ScD, discussed what we can learn from other countries about building meaningful social connections to improve health and well-being.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqqvrJK508E&feature=emb_logo
5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HEALTH AND... Social Connectedness
OCTOBER 20 & NOVEMBER 16, 2020
Mission: VetCheck

During the COVID-19 crisis, veterans are making supportive check-in calls to other veterans through Mission: VetCheck. A collaboration between the NYC Department of Veterans’ Services, the Mayor’s Office of ThriveNYC, and veteran-serving organizations, these calls provide veterans with information about how to access vital public services, including free meals, COVID-19 test sites locations, and mental health resources.

https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/mission-vetcheck
Community Development Counteracts Isolation

Community Development can address the negative health impacts of isolation

Found in both urban and rural communities, social isolation can reduce access to support systems, sense of security and affordable community services, undermining mental and physical health and reducing quality of life. As a growing epidemic in the US, social isolation is as significant a health hazard as alcohol and smoking, and more hazardous than obesity. Social isolation and loneliness increase a person's risk of premature death, is associated with increased risk of dementia, and can lead to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

Multiple factors can contribute to social isolation: from redlining, discriminatory housing policies, living in rural areas and gentrification, to resource constraints and societal barriers of aging. Isolation disproportionately affects marginalized communities including older adults, minorities, rural residents, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and immigrants.

When it comes to determining one’s health, ZIP Code is more important than genetic code; Community Development is in the ZIP Code improvement business. This series of fact sheets from NeighborWorks America and the Build Healthy Places Network highlights the common aims, evidence base, and what works for health and community development.

Early Childhood Systems

https://cssp.org/resource/coming-together-during-covid-19/
Need Help? Know Someone Who Does?

Online Lifeline Crisis Chat: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/