

Thanks to all who were able to participate in the webinar, “Parenting Now: Coping in the COVID World” on January 27th, 2021. If you were unable to attend, or would like the chance for an encore, the full recording is now available via a link on the Coalition home page, www.HWP4Y.ORG. Here’s a brief summary:

Our guest speaker, MassSupport Network’s Senior Team Leader, Sarah Gaer, began with an overview of the characteristics of stress that people might be feeling in the COVID environment. She discussed typical reactions to a traumatic event, and noted that the word “traumatic” is not as much about the event itself, but how it is processed by the individuals that experience the event. Sarah then explained the frequent connections between trauma and toxic stress, and how this applies in relation to COVID19, as we are living in a situation where the threat can seem ever-present. Sarah talked about “shattered assumptions” -- when events do not align with our typical world view, but emphasized the importance-- when bad things happen-- of realizing that we are *vulnerable but not helpless*. She outlined the five domains affected by trauma, including biological, neurological, relational, affective, and information processing; and both the immediate and long term impacts. Sarah explained that “when we think about protecting our children, one thing that is really important is making sure that we are taking care of [ourselves],” and provided a 10 step “resilience prescription” to utilize during these unprecedented times in the COVID world. She concluded by sharing the various MassSupport Services that are available and how the MassSupport Network can help both individuals and communities during this challenging time and offered further National and State resources available to the public.

In the community resource segment of the program, Kimberley Lee, Vice President of Resource Development for the Mental Health Association highlighted their BestLife program, MHA’s Emotional Health and Wellness Center, an outpatient behavioral health clinic, which is available to support families and individuals, including substance use and addiction recovery. Kathleen Cordier, Family Support Specialist for the Family Resource Center at Behavioral Health Network, described a large range of resources available through their program, which is open to all, has no qualification requirements, and is free of cost. Kerri O’Connor, Family Resource Coordinator for the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District, previewed a number of community-based support agencies and organizations that are available, and featured in the Coalition’s updated Community Resource Guide. A brief Q/A session with our panelists addressed participants’ questions, such as how the pandemic could be affecting kids developmentally and how that impact might affect our expectations of them.

As the program concluded, participants were reminded of opportunities to become involved in various Coalition activities, including Youth Mental Health First Aid courses that are scheduled periodically throughout the year and can be arranged for groups of five or more adults upon request. Participants were asked to complete an [evaluation survey](#) and encouraged to suggest topics of interest that may be offered in the future.

Survey reviews received so far have been very positive, with 100% rating the program as *Very Good or Excellent*. When asked to share the biggest takeaway from the program, comments included: “learning about the processing of a traumatic event and the practical strategies that parents can implement” and “there are so many resources - many free & confidential - to help ANYONE who is struggling in just about any facet of their life.” We truly appreciate the feedback, and hope that if you haven’t already you will still take a moment to visit the survey and add your thoughts and suggestions! Here’s the link: <https://forms.gle/DyqHu9Npw51K3vem7>. A recording of the session, in its entirety, is also available on the Coalition website, where you will notice many additional useful resources: www.HWP4Y.ORG.

Thanks again for your interest in this important topic. We look forward to keeping the conversation going at future Coalition programs and events and hope you will join us for our upcoming programs, including these opportunities that are currently scheduled!!

February 24, 7:00-8:15 PM-- Parenting Now: What You Need to Know About Social Media
(Presented by the Hampden-County District Attorney’s Office and the Youth Advisory Board
Preregistration Required:

March 30 (Elementary) OR March 31 (Middle/High School), 6:45-8:30PM-- Parenting Now: Tips and Tools for Strengthening Families (Presented by the Search Institute) (Details will be coming soon....check HWRSD or Coalition Website for registration information)

