

PILOT PROJECT - YEAR 1 REPORT

Mental Health Promotion Pilot



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION

WITH SUPPORT BY:



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

**THE NORCLIFFE
FOUNDATION**

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Introduction

Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State (BGCWA) has developed and completed the first year of a three-year pilot program to provide behavioral health staff support and trauma-informed training within their Clubs in partnership with **WA state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, PAXIS Institute and the Norcliffe Foundation.**

In the first year, the pilot has created positive impacts on the behavioral health of youth and teens across Washington state. These impacts were achieved through the utilization of three main strategies:

- ~ a full-time Behavioral Health Specialist for each of our 14 Club organizations;
- ~ youth-facing staff trained in an evidence based, trauma-informed care approach;
- ~ implementation of a social and emotional learning curriculum within each Club organization.

Four community-based youth-serving organizations subcontracted with BGCWA to implement trauma-informed care and mental health first aid training for their staff and volunteers:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound;
- Communities In Schools of Washington State;
- School's Out Washington and
- Washington State Alliance of YMCAs.

Cross-sector partnership ensured continuity of trauma-informed care approach throughout the out-of-school settings in WA state.

Implementation

Strategy One: Behavioral Support Specialists

Across the state, 14 full-time behavioral support specialists (BSS) were hired to support respective Club organization with implementation of the Mental Health Promotion Pilot program (MHPP). In addition to providing direct support to students, families and staff, BSS also directed staff training efforts, student Social and Emotional Learning programming, family and community engagement events, and grant program reporting and evaluation needs.

BSS positions are making a difference by helping kids and teens speak openly about their mental health experiences and challenges, destigmatize the topic of mental health, and educate members and their families about available community behavioral health resources.

BSS positions were tasked to:

- 01 Conduct small group mental health promotion sessions (19,185 hours).

- 02 Assist families in navigating complex behavioral health resources in their communities (475 referrals).

- 03 Provide resources to staff to alleviate compassion fatigue (2,171 hours).

- 04 Conduct one-on-one mental health support with kids and teens, as appropriate (1,144 members served).

Testimonials on the role of BSS staff:

“With Paige’s support, Club staff have been able to put an even greater focus on engaging families through mental-health centered activities. From a Self-Love Lab family event at our Clinton & Gloria John Clubhouse to a Yoga & Smoothies night at our Burton Elementary Clubhouse, Clubs have engaged hundreds of youth and family members and provided food, access to resources, and a sense of community. Through partnerships with organizations like Bridgeview Resource Center and Columbia River Mental Health Services, Paige and Club staff have been able to connect youth and families with resources, referrals to services, peer supports, and countless other crucial needs.” – **SW Washington**

“The Skills Coach (BSS) is able to spend time building relationships with members and their families. She can work one-on-one and have meaningful conversations at the Club, rather than suspending members and referring them out in order to address behavioral challenges. As an organization, we believe in restorative practices, and we are now more able to adopt these practices and keep more kids in Club.” – **Thurston County**



Jenny Volmer, Behavioral Support Specialist,
Boys & Girls Clubs of Benton and Franklin Counties

Strategy Two: PAXIS Institute Partnership.

Under the guidance of the national leader on trauma-informed care, PAXIS Institute, BGCWA trained 398 full-time and 674 part-time youth development professionals across Boys & Girls Clubs in WA. PAX Tools for Human Services training curriculum ensures that all Club interactions are based on principles of trauma-informed care, and guide behavior interventions to be conducted in a therapeutic way to avoid re-traumatization and reinforce positive behaviors and personal wins.

As is related in reports from BGCWA's member Clubs, PAX Tools for Human Services training is reframing behavior management for all youth-facing staff, ensuring that Clubs' approach is steeped in equity, restorative justice and trauma-informed care. Two versions of the training were provided, one for our full-time staff leadership and one for our part-time youth workers.

PAX Tools for Human Services (PTHS)

training was an 8-hour, live, virtual training facilitated by a PAX certified trainer with no more than 35 participants in each session. All full-time employees across our state completed a PTHS session learning how to implement 11 evidence-based strategies in their professional practice during normal interactions with youth and teens. Club professionals received strategies and materials they needed to effectively use PAX tools as well as to better engage parents and caregivers.

PAX Tools for Youth Workers (PTYW)

training sessions were completed by part-time youth workers. The PTYW sessions were delivered to staff via 4 pre-recorded training sessions accessible asynchronously and to be completed on their own schedule during a designated period. Much like the PTHS trainings, participants learned about the tools they needed to implement 11 evidence-based strategies for children and teen behavior management.

Testimonials about PAX training:

“PAX has helped a lot of Club sites build their culture. Using the harmonica has been a blast with the kids and making use of the popsicle sticks has eliminated a lot of the usual conflict amongst the members as to who gets to be first in line and who goes last. It has also created a sense of standard practice for staff that substitute at a Club other than the one they are regularly assigned.” – **Skagit County**

“The knowledge and skills provided by PAX training have greatly impacted our staff’s ability to show up for Club youth each day. After going through the training, staff not only have the tools they need to be their best for youth, but they understand why certain techniques are beneficial for youth’s mental, social, and emotional well-being.” – **Southwest Washington**



Kudos Notes, one of PAX Tools evidence-based strategies, on a Shoutout Showcase board at Boys & Girls Clubs of Skagit County.

Strategy Three: SEL Programming.

Over 48,000 Club youth and teens across Washington participated in activities implemented with trauma-informed best practices. BSS worked with Club program staff to provide intentionality in determining how to implement evidence based social and emotional learning curriculum(s) (SEL) and activities into their specific Club settings to build youth competencies in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These programs help build relationships between Club members and staff, strengthen Club to family connections, and support and reinforce the work already done by the educators and support staff within our school partners.

01 SMART Moves - Emotional Wellness

SMART Moves is a targeted program in BGCA's Health and Wellness core program area that supports Healthy Lifestyles. It builds the foundational social-emotional and health skills that will enable youth to make healthy decisions and avoid risky behaviors. This targeted program focuses on positive coping strategies that build three cognitive-behavior skills most linked to helping youth avoid negative thought patterns and negative behaviors: self-regulation, impulse control, and stress management. It offers several different tracks to help staff target and deliver age-appropriate materials and lessons to their members. SMART Moves – Emotional Wellness encourages and supports family engagement within the program. There are “homework” sessions that youth complete at home with their family and/or caretakers, as well as games and agendas for Clubs to use to develop family nights at Club.

02 Small Group Sessions & Teen "TED Talks"

Some Clubs adopted the approach of hosting “TED Talk” days with their teens. Teens viewed a short clip or presentation on an issue of relevance and then discussed this topic facilitated by the Club's BSS or Teen Director. This format not only provided a safe place for teens to practice active listening skills but also gave them a chance to share commonalities and appreciate and understand each other's differences, thus contributing to healthier relationships with their peers and increased self-confidence about their own individual uniqueness.

03 Quiet Corners and Sensory Tools

Unlike the school environment, Club sites are loud and active most of the time. The mental health pilot project gave Clubs the opportunity to analyze and address how their physical Club setup was contributing to negative student behaviors and outcomes, especially for students with sensory processing challenges. All organizations utilized this opportunity to find ways to make their Club sites more accommodating and were able to partner with other community organizations to help build out quiet corners and rooms for youth to take sensory breaks in as well as increase their organization's supply and use of tools like noise canceling headphones, fidget toys and alternative seating options. These physical changes created more inclusive environments for youth.

04 Family Nights and Community Engagement

Clubs used this opportunity to prioritize the re-building of relationships with Club members' families. Before the COVID pandemic, Club's had a time-honored tradition of connecting with families through frequent family nights. These events allow our Clubs to update families on Club news and happenings, invite families to get to know our Youth Development professionals working directly with their children, and meet Club leadership. Safety precautions related to the COVID pandemic disrupted these efforts for several years though.

Thanks to this pilot project, Clubs have been able to re-prioritize this critical work, re-establish frequent family nights throughout their sites, and use such events and the relationships built to help families navigate a complex behavioral health landscape in WA state. Family nights provided 5,500 Club kids and their families educational materials and community resources as Family nights frequently serve as opportunities to connect Club families to a variety of community resources that outreach to our Clubs, such as health insurance providers, supplemental reading and tutoring programs, child safety initiatives, vaccination drives, etc. Often the programming for a Family Night is a combination of a Club-identified theme augmented by a community service or an organization with a matching focus.



Family Night "Culture Celebration" at Boys & Girls Clubs of Benton and Franklin Counties.

Trauma-Informed Care Training Partners

Washington State Alliance of YMCAs, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound, Communities In Schools of Washington State and School's Out Washington partnered with BGCWA to provide Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) training to youth workers across WA state. Collectively, our partners trained over 500 youth-serving staff in trauma-informed care, reaching an additional 18,000 kids and teens.

01 Washington State Alliance of YMCAs

YMCAs of WA also partnered with the PAXIS Institute to equip staff with PAX Tools for Human Services training. They provided over 137 staff with access to the same 11 evidence-based strategies to conduct programs in a therapeutic way to avoid re-traumatization and reinforce positive behaviors and personal wins. As a result, 92% of participants left training with a clear understanding of how to implement strategies with you, with 2/3 feeling very confident to implementation the very next day. YMCAs of WA pre-purchased additional training modules to ensure that 80 more staff will receive training over the summer.

02 Big Brothers Big Sisters in Washington

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound organized training and trauma informed care workshop and services for their agency and four other Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations across Washington, including Inland Northwest, Snohomish County, Island County, and Southwest Washington. Collectively they trained 142 staff and mentors. Trainings included BBBS of America's Youth Protection Summit modules, Mental Health First Aid, How to Talk so Kids will Listen, How to Talk When Kids Won't Listen, and Compassion without Fatigue.

03 Communities In Schools of Washington State

Communities In Schools in WA utilized funds to have an in-house training team provide Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) curriculum, developed by Mental Health First Aid USA, to 15 affiliate teams, with 8 training sessions in Kent, Yakima, Puyallup, Pasco, Walla Walla, Wenatchee, Bellingham, and Spokane, reaching a total of 157 staff. The 8-hour program teaches participants how to identify risk factors and warning signs for mental health challenges among adolescents, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, ADHD, disruptive behavior disorders, and substance abuse disorder. Training participants learned the AGLIEE method: approach and assess for risk of suicide or harm; give reassurance and information; listen nonjudgmentally; encourage appropriate professional help; and encourage self-help and other support strategies.

04 School's Out Washington

Schools Out Washington used the funds to support three separate organizations: Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Engagement in Omak; Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic in Toppenish; and Chinese Information Service Center in Seattle. These organizations serve a diverse group of children and teens. In total, they provided various training sessions to 81 staff and volunteers. Some of the trainings that were completed by these organizations were Motivational Interviewing and Trauma Informed Care, Children Mental Health and Behavior Management, Youth Mental Health First Aid and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Leadership.

Testimonials from our Partners:

“We utilized Shared Vision at one of our afterschool programs that began having high behaviors at the end of the school year. We supported the Site Coordinator and her staff in creating the shared vision. Children and staff participated in creating their board on a large poster board. The board was posted for all to see. Children followed what was agreed upon and even came back with additional statements to add to their posterboard. When someone did something that was on the “less” side, they would go to the board and check, then would stop the behavior. The high behaviors were reduced significantly after this site created their vision board.” - Jordan Engel, Business Manager, YMCA of the Greater Tri-Cities

“Our staff greatly appreciated the opportunity to attend TIC trainings. As a result, our entire program team has completed relevant training, we have rolled out enrichment training opportunities to our mentors and we have partnered with agencies serving children who have experienced trauma. This opportunity has launched a renewed energy about resources for volunteers and ways we can support families. We are even having 2 staff become trainers of Mental Health First Aid so we can continue to deliver needed training to our mentors and the community.” – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound

Measurement

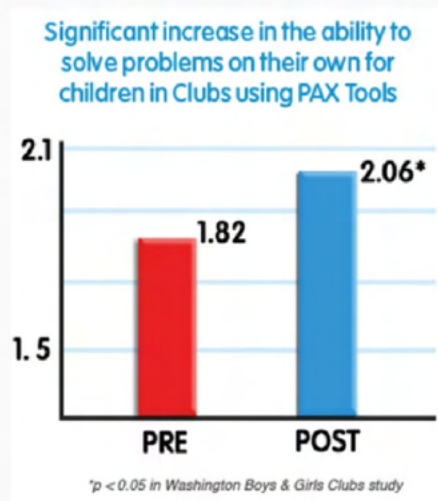
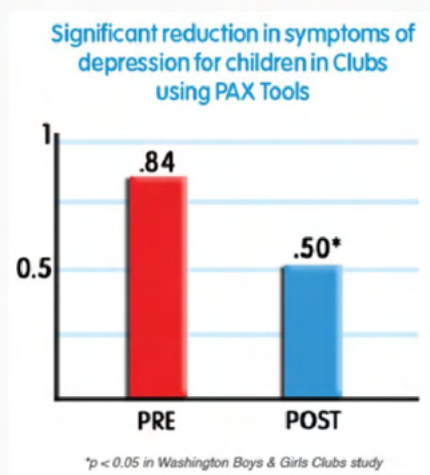
To measure the success of the pilot, BGCWA engaged PAXIS Institute's highly qualified research team.



Staff trained in PAX Tools for Human Workers complete two required surveys, one immediately upon completion, and one 6-8 weeks later. Surveys measure staff's own perception of training success and applicability as well as their observation of the strategies' impact on kids served. Differentiation between PTHS and PTYS ensured that training strategies were narrowly tailored to staff roles and demographic of youth development professionals.

Providing these trauma-informed evidence-based strategies to all Boys & Girls Club staff is vital to club workforce development and retention. Youth workers with positive Club experiences and a high sense of efficacy remain in the field and with their Club - ensuring ongoing and sustainable positive relationships for Club youth and safe and trusted adult mentors.

Population-wide analysis of post-training surveys of nearly 1,000 WA Club staff showed statistically significant positive correlation of PAX Tools training and pro-social, positive outcomes for both Club youth and youth workers. 96% of Club staff said they are likely to continue their work with youth and found PAX strategies helpful in supporting the children they work with.



National Youth Outcomes Initiative, Boys & Girls Clubs of America

All Clubs in WA participate in the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) administered by Boys & Girls Clubs of America, which, among other things, measures members' Social and Emotional Development (SED) and Youth Risk Behavior on an annual basis.

- In 2023*, WA Club observed a slight positive increase in six of the eight Social and Emotional Development measurements (Coping with Challenge, Identifying Emotions, Stress Management, Problem Solving, Self-Efficacy and Impulse Control). Two measures saw slight decreases or no change (Empathy and Relationship Building).
- Measurements for Stress Management had the most significant growth with the statement "I know ways I can calm myself down" seeing an increase of 3% points with 81% of Club youth surveyed answering "True" or "Very true".
- Other positive outcomes highlighted in the survey were that 89% of Club youth surveyed said "When something is really hard, they keep working on it instead of giving up," 94% believe that "if they try their best, they can accomplish most things;" and 94% "try to help others when they see people in need."

*NYOI survey of 139 Clubs and 3,469 members in WA.



Clubs report performance outputs to BGCWA monthly, thus helping our team understand the pilot's reach and local mental health promotion needs through the numbers of kids and families served, staff assisted, sessions and events conducted, etc.

Impact

Upon completion of year 1 of the Mental Health Promotion Pilot, Club organizations and trauma-informed care training partners submitted narrative reports sharing qualitative results of their individual accomplishments.

The growing rate of suicidal ideation amongst youth and teens across Washington state has been a critical concern for Clubs. The Behavioral Support Specialist position has increased each Club's capacity to properly recognize and respond to youth experiencing signs.

"We had a specific kid (teenager) at one of our clubs continuously asking to meet with the BSS. After several different conversations he asked our BSS to reach out to his parents as he felt he would like to talk to an actual counselor. Our BSS spoke with the child's mom and set up a meeting with the school counselor, starting the process to get him additional help and resources. It was shared that he had been having some suicidal thoughts which scared him. Thankfully, he knew he had someone he could talk to (the BSS) to make sure he wasn't going "crazy." Normally this child is very quiet, and no one would have suspected anything; but because we had someone in this position, the child was able to reach out and work with someone (BSS) who knew how to get him the help he needed." – **Spokane County**



Calm Corner at the Lakewood Branch of Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound



Teen Meditation Time at
Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County



Staff Yoga Time at
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Columbia Basin

Kids across our country were cut off from face-to-face human relations with their peers at critical development stages during the COVID pandemic. A large focus of our work this past year has been to use SEL tools, such as the SMART Moves – Emotional Wellness curriculum to help our youth learn how to engage with their peers and build healthy and supportive relationships.

“At one of our community Clubhouses there have been numerous behavioral challenges with a large group of fifth and sixth grade girls. We rolled out a small group in November to meet with these young women on a weekly basis to work through the Smart Moves curriculum. The girls were extremely disruptive within the group for most of the 7 weeks that we met. It was clear that they were uncomfortable discussing anything that felt vulnerable so they would deflect with disruptive behaviors. When the group wrapped up it was honestly hard to gauge if any progress was made at all. However, in the weeks following each of these girls approached staff begging to start up the groups again! We have since done two other rounds of small group work with this cohort of young women! They are eager, attentive, and leaning in to sharing honestly about their lives and their feelings. They have grown tremendously in their emotional regulation and their kindness towards one another and kindness toward themselves. In fact, those same youth asked if the BSS would please start up a summer small group next week and the youth even had specific topics in mind they wanted to discuss!” – Benton & Franklin Counties

A part of every Boys & Girls Club organization's mission is to be there for the "kids who need us most." However, prior to being able to provide every WA Club organization the financial and programmatic support they needed to implement a designated mental health promotion program, Clubs simply did not have the level of staff needed to assist youth with behavior challenges, many of whom staff knew were the "kids who need us most." However, with the addition of the BSS position, PAX training for all staff and increased SEL programming at every organization, Clubs have increased their capacity to be there for higher-need youth while still providing a safe and supportive environment for all kids.

"There is a boy who is five years old and has ASD, ADHD, and PTSD. He is in foster care and has a lot of special needs. The funding has allowed a BSS to be available to work more closely with him to help him with emotional regulation and other self-regulation skills. We've provided an area called the calming corner that gives him a quiet space to take breaks and calm down. When he first started coming to the club for summer camp, he was scared and mostly non-verbal. He was scared to use our bathroom and for the first three weeks he attended he wouldn't. Recently, he has been using the bathroom on his own and is now communicating using his words. He is learning how to play well with others in his group and doesn't spend as much time in the calm down corner. Through the funding we have been able to have a dedicated BSS staff to work with kids like him and keep them attending our program." – **Snohomish County**

"One of the members who experienced this change in approach is a fifth-grade student. He moved to a new school this year, entered a new living arrangement with his mom, and was diagnosed with ADHD. He and his family faced a lot of changes and difficulty. He did not yet have the coping skills to deal with his feelings. He got into fights which almost became physical, didn't follow directions, and was very quick to react. In the past, a Branch Director would have worked with a member and their family in this situation. Because Branch Directors are responsible for so many aspects of the Club, their time is limited. The BSS is able to dedicate their time and expertise on one child at a time and help them build the tools they need to stay at Club. This fifth-grade member was able to stay at the Club because of his growth. He met with the Skills Coach regularly, and hugged her every time she came in. The Skills Coach was able to meet with his mom and find out what was going on at home and be a resource to her as she navigated conversations about IEPs and behavior plans at school. By the end of the school year, this member had far fewer incident reports and was able to enjoy his time at Club." – **Thurston County**

Year 2 Plan

Strategies for further impact

- 01 Provide trauma-informed care training to new hires across WA.

- 02 Facilitate professional development opportunities for BSS staff by offering sessions with subject matter experts in the field of mental health promotion.

- 03 Partner on additional staff training with other youth development organizations in WA.

- 04 Assist kids and families with targeted strategies to improve and promote emotional well-being.









Continuous Quality Improvement

- 01 Deepen outcome measurement and evaluation by regularly collecting staff observations of members' behavior utilizing standardized instruments and matching findings to the trauma-informed care training strategies available through PAX Tools.

- 02 Encourage local Club organizations to further incorporate youth and family voice into mental health promotion planning, thus ensuring that various activities and programs are culturally-responsive and provide support and information relevant to local needs.

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Boys & Girls Clubs of America. (2023). National Youth Outcomes Initiative, 2023 WA State Results. Atlanta, GA.