

# When to Worry and What to Do

Utilizing virtual care resources to support student mental health

## When to Worry

- Changes in mood and/or behavior, unimproved with school supports
- Struggles with daily functioning, school absenteeism, substance use, self harm, suicidality

## Communicating with Families

- Prioritize listening and relationship building. Approach conversations with a learner's perspective. Start from a place of shared goals and wanting what's best for the student.
- Strive to learn family and student perspectives (in particular with tweens/teens) and continually seek their input as you provide recommendations.
- Lean into psychoeducation, recognizing families come with different levels of experience and understanding about mental health. Consider and be respectful of cultural factors.

## Considering Virtual Care Resources

- Telehealth offers a unique opportunity for schools to address staff and community provider shortages and expand access to care. About 20% of school districts across the U.S. have now brought telehealth into their MTSS.
- Mental health services including outpatient treatment, specialized outpatient, intensive outpatient (IOP), and partial hospitalization programs (PHP) can be delivered virtually with no difference in clinical outcomes when compared to in-person care.

## Collaborating with Providers/Programs

- Close communication between schools and providers/clinical programs are fundamental to care, especially after intake/admission and before graduation/discharge.
- Identify contacts early on. Get releases from family. Advocate and share your voice. Try again if you don't hear back. Your perspective matters.

## Where to Go / What to Do

- Never worry alone. Consult with school colleagues, supervisors, therapists when present.
- Leverage community providers (including PCPs), local crisis or urgent care programs.
- When greater worry, consider in-person & virtual higher levels of care (IOP/PHP). Families can often self-refer to IOP/PHP level of care. ER evaluation is not necessarily required.
- Utilize ER/911 for acute safety concerns.
- Know that sometimes improvements take time. Remember to take care of you.

**BRADLEY  
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For referrals, call Kids' Link: 1-855-543-5465

  
**Cartwheel**  
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For questions or to learn more about Cartwheel's care model and school partnerships:

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