Cope. Recover. Grow. Responding to the Behavioral Health Crisis Caused by COVID-19

Behavioral Health

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Note from Jami Young, PhD, faculty lead for PolicyLab's Behavioral Health Portfolio: PolicyLab's Behavioral Health Portfolio has been curating an excellent blog post series for Mental Health Awareness Month that highlights some of the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic have been directly and indirectly affecting the mental and behavioral health of youth and their families. As part of that series, we thought it important to include the voices of our community partners to learn more about how they are approaching the new challenges that have arisen for organizations working to support the mental and behavioral health needs of communities. Many thanks to Joe Pyle and the whole Scattergood Foundation team for sharing their insights and for their dedication to making behavioral health a central component of improving family well-being and quality of life. We invite you to check back for new posts as part of the series or to follow along for updates on Twitter at @PolicyLabCHOP.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and this year, there is no better theme than Tools 2 Thrive. Amid the rising health and economic concerns of the COVID-19 global pandemic, we hope you are taking the necessary steps to stay safe and healthy. In addition to ensuring your physical health, it's critical that we all take action to stay mentally healthy and resilient. From owning your feelings, to finding the positive and cultivating gratitude, to staying connected with friends and family while physically distancing, to breathing exercises, meditation, and therapy, there are dozens of ways you can prioritize your mental health and well-being. Practicing healthy coping mechanisms can help each of us get through these challenging times.

As this unpredictable situation continues to unfold, the toll on population mental health is difficult to fully comprehend. How will the combination of unprecedented stressors like the fear of becoming ill, economic

downturn, social isolation, and more impact us all in the long-term? How will we reckon with the deep inequities that COVID-19 has illuminated? How will systems adjust to help communities?

The Foundation has been asked how we are responding to the needs of organizations and systems, and the best methods for supporting mental health during these challenging times.

We will be the first to say that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, we are adopting a guiding framework: *Cope. Recover. Grow.* The framework draws on posttraumatic growth research. Posttraumatic growth is a positive adaptation process through which people reevaluate their traumatic experience. The *Cope. Recover. Grow.* framework will guide our staff and board as we support organizations and communities to positively adapt throughout the course the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, we hope this framework will help us and others to shift our systems to address the residual behavioral health needs for years to come.

COPE

The emergence of COVID-19 has created significant challenges for daily life, requiring resources and outlets for coping. We are supporting programs that are: meeting basic human needs of communities, addressing the fear and uncertainty caused by COVID-19, building needed social connection and supporting staff well-being.

RECOVER

Once the immediate threat of COVID-19 has dissipated, individuals, organizations, and communities will require resources for rebuilding and working toward a new and better normal. We will support programs that: use practices of reflection and storytelling to process trauma and toxic stress, help individuals and communities to grieve, incorporate healing practices, continue to care for staff, and document key lessons so we all can move toward a stronger future.

GROW

COVID-19 has illuminated and exacerbated structural challenges and inequities, requiring us to think differently about how to best support individuals, organizations and communities. Moving forward, the Foundation will support programs and systems that: successfully initiate new ideas that were needed during the crisis but did not exist, disrupt the current system to respond, and demand more in policy and best practices.

We ask funders, service providers, government, and others to join us in using the *Cope. Recover. Grow.* Framework to guide your COVID-19 response. It is critical that we build a social impact sector that:

- Works collectively to build community resilience by functioning across all *Cope. Recover. Grow*. categories;
- Draws on the principles of trauma-informed practice and diversity, equity, and inclusion to develop strategies for action;
- Integrates community voice with data and evidence in decision making; and
- Advocates for programs and policies that address and transform structural conditions.

Finally, we are humbled by the compassion, dedication and spirit of Philadelphians through this crisis. Thank you to all the individuals, organizations, and communities that are working tirelessly to promote healing and connection.

Joseph Pyle, MA, is the president of the Thomas Scattergood Behavioral Health Foundation.