



Bureau of Indian Education
**Behavioral Health
& Wellness Program**

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The BHWP Messenger

Culturally relevant, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness resources for schools, staff, students, and families

BHWP CEU Webinar Series Provides Skill-Building Opportunities

The Behavioral Health and Wellness Program (BHWP) is pleased to introduce a new behavioral health Continuing Education Unit (CEU) webinar series. These courses have been tailored especially for those in behavioral health related roles but are open to any staff interested in attending. CEUs will be available for any licensed behavioral health professional (LPCs, LMFTs, LCSWs, etc.) and will provide opportunities for behavioral health skill-building and obtaining training hours toward continued licensure. For information regarding the upcoming webinars or to register, please click on the link below.

Upcoming CEU Webinars

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| April 22, 2022: | Motivational Interviewing, Level 2 (6 CEUs) |
| May 13, 2022: | Ethics (6 CEUs) |
| August 12, 2022: | Educators and Secondary Trauma (3 CEUs) |

Creating Student Support Systems to Overcome Challenges

By LaDonna Richardson, BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist, LCSW, LCAS

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing opioid epidemic have intensified the behavioral health challenges many young people are facing, and this is particularly true for Indigenous students who often reside in Tribal or rural communities with significantly strained resources. Creating strong support systems for our youth helps strengthen resilience, reduce rates of depression and anxiety, and encourages them to remain in school, graduate, and potentially further their education. Here are some ways to build student support systems:

- **Nurture Relationships.** Provide opportunities for students to learn about healthy relationships, the importance of setting





and maintaining boundaries, and how to ask for the support when dealing with challenges. Teach students the importance of engaging and connecting with their peers. Encourage empathy and listening to others. Look for opportunities to help children foster connectivity by suggesting they connect to peers in-person or through safe and healthy online connections.

- **Build a strong parent and community network.** Involved parents and community members are an important element of student support systems.
- **Talk through difficulties and challenges.** When youth face personal challenges, help them look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Although some children may be too young to consider a long-term viewpoint, it helps them see a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be promising.
- **Model and encourage strength-based thinking and problem-solving.** An optimistic, positive outlook can help encourage students to focus on the positive moments in life. During school, use history as an illustration to show life moves forward after unfortunate events. Remind students of different methods to handle different hardships successfully and connect those past challenges to building strength to handle future challenges. Help students learn to trust themselves to solve problems and make decisions. Help students see how their accomplishments contribute to the wellbeing of the class.
- **Openly discuss how to accept change or life transitions.** Change can be scary for children and youth. Help students recognize that change is a fundamental part of life.
- **Help youth set goals.** Learn to examine what is going well and determine a plan of action for areas that need improvement.

As a student, I struggled with inadequate support systems while attending high school in rural North Carolina. The county I grew up in was ranked one of the poorest counties in the state. My stepdad had dropped out of high school. My mom had graduated from high school, but she could not provide solutions for the challenges I faced. I recall applying to colleges and financial aid with very little support from my parents. They wanted to help me, but they just didn't know how. I was able to navigate these obstacles by utilizing services offered through my school guidance counselor and community members who had attended college.

My challenges continued after high school. As I sat in class on my first day of college, I felt so out of place. I was an Indigenous student at a predominantly white institution. My life experiences were in stark contrast to other students. I felt homesick and my grades suffered. I decided to withdraw from college and return home. However, I continued working toward my goals. I enrolled in a local community college and continued my education from there. My goal was to be the first person in my family to graduate from college. I was able to achieve that goal because of the positive relationships and support systems in place to help me.



Relationships and support systems with educators and other essential school personnel helped me develop my ability to make plans and take action to solve problems. It helped me develop the capacity to manage difficult emotions and build effective communication skills. Building resilience requires flexibility and adaptation. Learning ways to adapt to all of life's moments is worth building in our students and Indigenous communities.

Virtual Talking Circles: April 5 and April 21, 2022

BHWP continues to offer virtual Talking Circles twice each month. This month, Talking Circles will occur on **Tuesday, April 5, and Thursday, April 21, 2022**. Both sessions will begin at **1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern**. Virtual Talking Circles are available to all staff or employees from Bureau-operated schools (BOS), Tribally-controlled schools (TCS), Navajo District schools, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), any Tribal colleges and/or universities (TCUs), and employees within any BIE department. To register for Talking Circles in April, [click here](#).

Wellness Wednesday: Supporting Students in the Classroom

The next Wellness Wednesday webinar will be held **April 20, 2022**. The topic is "**Supporting Students in the Classroom**." It will focus on strategies and tools for strength-based and trauma-informed classroom management. Education Specialists Rebecca Marquardt and LaVonne Vayder, both former educators, will facilitate the webinar.

To register, please [click here](#) to visit the event page. After registering for this event, you will receive a confirmation email with the meeting link to join via Zoom and add the webinar to your calendar. **Note:** You may need to check your email inbox folders, including the spam or junk folder. Webinar start times are **1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern**. We look forward to seeing you there!

In Case You Missed It!

We appreciate everyone who attended **Wellness Wednesday: Balancing Social Media and Wellness** in March. If you were unable to participate, [click here](#) to watch the recording on the BHWP YouTube channel.

New Monthly Video Series: Cultural Connections

The BHWP team recently debuted its new video series, **Cultural Connections**, which are monthly videos focused on various wellness topics and rooted in Indigenous culture. **Cultural Connections: Strengthening Wellness in Children** is available on BHWP's YouTube channel. [Click here](#) to watch the video, produced and narrated by the BHWP Communication team.



Meet a member of our BHWP Team

LaDonna Richardson, BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist, LCSW, LCAS

"Naha ':pipi, LaDonna Richardson mi kila':kewa mima Haliwa-Saponi yesa, Hollister NC wa:tiwa."

"Good day, my name is LaDonna Richardson. I am of the Haliwa-Saponi people, and I live in Hollister, North Carolina. I am a BHWP Behavioral Health and Wellness Specialist. I practice wellness by engaging in physical exercise. I love doing cardio and resistance training. I believe that all health is behavioral health, and by engaging in a regular exercise routine, I am improving my physical and mental health."

Ms. Richardson received her undergraduate degree from North Carolina Wesleyan College and her master's degree from East Carolina University. She is dually licensed as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and a Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist (LCAS). Ms. Richardson's background includes child welfare and working as part of an integrated team providing behavioral health services. Ms. Richardson enjoys volunteering in her community, traveling to powwows, and spending time with her family.



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The BIE Behavioral Health and Wellness Program

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Subscribe to the BHWP YouTube channel and receive updates when Wellness Wednesday webinars and Cultural Connections videos are released each month. Please click the "SUBSCRIBE" image above to visit our YouTube page and subscribe.

We welcome your suggestions for The BHWP Messenger.
Contact us at biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com