

Let's Start Talking about Mental Health & the Opioid Epidemic

It is true... both these subjects have typically been considered “taboo” to talk about. They are very difficult subjects, but the truth is, they are more prominent in our society now than ever before. In fact, approximately 1 in 5 adults in the US (43.8 million- 18.5%) experiences mental illness in a given year and approximately 1 in 5 youth age 13-18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. www.nami.org

The numbers concerning our current Opioid Epidemic are just as bleak. Opioids are “a class of drugs that include the illicit drug heroin as well as the licit prescription pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine...” Of the 20.5 million Americans 12 or older that had a substance use disorder in 2015, 2 million were from prescription pain relievers and 591,000 involved heroin. www.asam.org

To me, those numbers are SHOCKING! Therefore, Bellevue City Schools has decided it is time to *Start Talking* about these subjects. To do so, we have partnered with all three of our area Mental Health Agencies (Cornerstone Counseling, Family Life Counseling and Firelands Counseling and Recovery Services). Cornerstone has helped bring some of our wonderful presentations to our district including the *Megan Meier Foundation* regarding bullying, cyberbullying and suicide.

Family Life Counseling now has a mental health specialist in each of the three buildings to help meeting the needs of our students. Caitlyn Zoeller- LPC, is currently at BHS on Tuesdays from 7:45a.m.-11:30a.m.. They accept Medicaid and most insurances. You may stop in during her office hours to speak with her or call Mrs. Mohr (419-484-5072 or Mr. Siesel (419-484-5073) regarding a referral for these services.

Firelands Counseling will also be present in our buildings. Their mental health counselors will be sitting with students during their lunch periods to have open, honest conversations about the issues students feel are affecting them most. We will then make decisions about programs and ways to help, from the feedback we receive.

Did you know... *Children of parents who talk with their teens about drugs are 50% less likely to use???* Please join with us and our area mental health agencies to **START TALKING!** It's our first line of defense to reduce and further prevent more mental health and drug issues in our community.

Mrs. Jill Miller MSSA, LSW- District Social Worker