

PILOT PROJECT - YEAR 2 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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Pilot Overview: Years 1 and 2

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

In the first two years, 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 (“Strategy 1”, see pages 8-9 of this report);
- ~ youth-facing staff trained in an evidence-based, trauma-informed care approach (“Strategy 2”, see pages 10-11);
- ~ implementation of a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum within each Club organization (“Strategy 3”, see pages 12-13).

The pilot’s three main strategies have produced incredible, lasting effects on Club youth and teens. Club staff have reported countless examples of positive impact. Students who were negatively impacted by social isolation during COVID school closures, have had increased opportunities to develop the social and emotional skills needed to create healthy friendships (see example on page 16). At-risk youth now have additional, trained professionals checking in on their wellbeing, ensuring that they have the behavioral support they need to be successful members of society (examples on page 17). But most importantly, more kids have access to a trusted, caring adult they can come to when in a mental health crisis or unsure how to navigate challenges such as anxiety, depression or even suicidality (example on page 15).

Evaluation

Year 2 Evaluation

Washington Boys & Girls Clubs embarked on an ambitious, narrowly tailored internal research project. In this project, leadership sought to determine the measurable effects of the Mental Health Promotion Pilot programming and its impact on Club members. Leadership identified six cluster-analyzed items from a set of factor-analyzed items from two normed measures with evidence-based predictive qualities. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a reliable diagnostic screener for risk probability for DSM disorders, and variations of the Social Competence Scale have been in use in the ongoing FastTrack survey for over 40 years. Both instruments are routinely used in general observations by parents, teachers, and other professionals for young people of all ability levels.

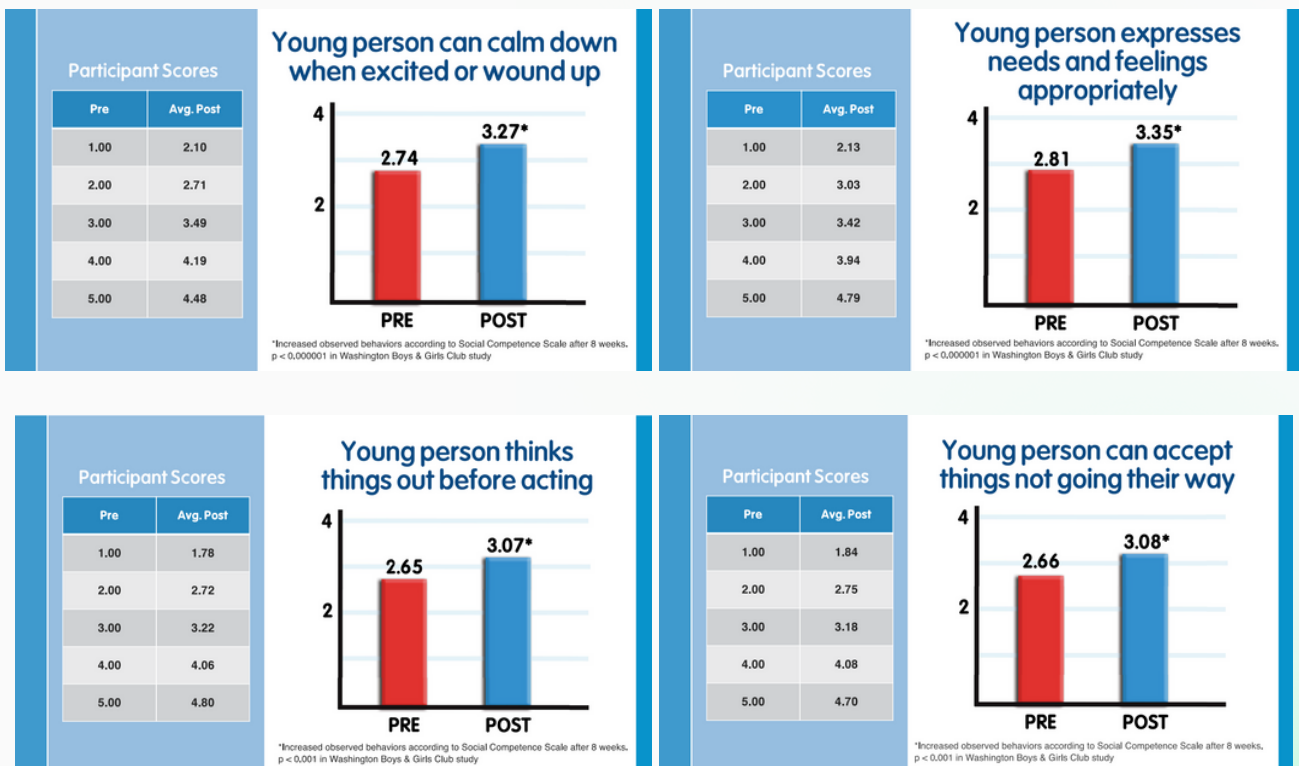
Leadership asked BSS staff at each Club to randomly select anonymous members known only to them for observation. Members were selected from a pre-determined stratified list that BSS created themselves - identifying members in need of low, medium, and high levels of behavioral supports. Then, utilizing a time-series design, staff answered the six items about each of the randomly identified members and recorded their answers at three different points throughout the year.

This study demonstrated remarkable, measurable growth on all six observation items at every Club.

Evaluation, continued.

For each item, participants at all Clubs averaged about 10-20% increase over their initial scores. However, this does not tell the whole story as the stratified sample of young people observed included a group who needed very little support from the beginning. A paired samples test revealed a statistically significant increase in scores on every item on the survey. In fact, participants initially observed at the lowest level of performance increased by about 100% on each item. This means that Club programming is having the greatest impact on those members who need it the very most. These outcomes will be included in upcoming prevention and youth development manuscripts.

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Evaluation

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 Year 1 of our program, WA Clubs observed a slight positive increase in six of the eight SED measurements with significant growth in measurements for *stress management* with 81% of Club youth surveyed answering “True” or “Very true” when responding to the statement, “I know ways I can calm myself down.”

In Year 2, WA Clubs maintained much of the positive movement seen in year one NYOI results, as well as improvement in measurements for *coping with challenge*. For the question, “If something is really hard, I keep working on it,” 91% of Club youth answered “True” or “Very true,” a growth of 2% points.

**NYOI survey of 136 Clubs and 3,738 member responses.*



Boys & Girls Club members show off their “Calm” SEL activity

Collaborations

Utilizing information collected throughout Year 1 of the pilot, BGCWA embarked on an ambitious year-long effort to share our approach to youth mental health promotion activities throughout the out-of-school space.

Youth development programs and spaces are uniquely qualified to support youth mental health and highlight positive emotional well-being practices among children and teens.

Our intent is to share our work widely, both to popularize the idea of mental health prevention programming in youth development spaces, and to initiate productive cross-learning and best practice sharing opportunities. To that extent, BGCWA presented at state and national conferences, partnered with news media organizations to communicate our impact, and participated in information gathering by state and national research organizations that aim to promote new and emerging best practices in youth behavioral health promotion.

Conferences

NAMI of WA
Bridge Conference, SOWA
Nonprofit Association of WA
National Mentor Conference

Media

KOMO 4 News stories



Pasco



Mount Vernon

Collaborations

National Academy of Sciences
*Blueprint for a National Prevention
Infrastructure for Behavioral Health
Disorders interview*

William D. Ruckelshaus Center (UW/WSU)
K-12 Pandemic Impact project interview

Awards

Washington Healthcare Authority
Div. of Behavioral Health and Recovery:
*2024 Prevention Awards of Excellence –
Prevention Professional / Community
Prevention Leader*

Implementation

Strategy One: Behavioral Support Specialists.

Across the state, 14 full-time behavioral support specialists (BSS) were hired to support respective Club organizations 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 SEL 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 (49,384 hours).*

- 02 Assist families in navigating complex behavioral health resources in their communities (1,597 referrals).

- 03 Provide resources to staff to alleviate compassion fatigue (5,892 hours).

- 04 Conduct one-on-one mental health support with kids and teens, as appropriate (2,690 members served).

**All numbers throughout the report are inclusive of Year 1 and Year 2 services.*

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**

“Our BSS has been instrumental in building a culture that has increased the average days of attendance of youth in our Clubs. This improvement is attributed to her effective family interactions, consistent behavior management strategies, and the creation of a welcoming atmosphere that encourages regular participation. The structured support and training she’s provided to staff have empowered them to manage youth behavior more effectively, contributing to a more stable and engaging environment for all participants. These efforts have collectively enhanced the overall impact on youth and families, leading to a more positive and supportive Club experience.” – **Lewis County**



Benton and Franklin Counties’ BSS, Jenny Volmer (front) and Alyssa Trout (rear) lead Club members through a group mental health promotion activity during Summer Jam event.

Strategy Two: PAXIS Institute Partnership.

Under the guidance of PAXIS Institute, the national leader on trauma-informed care, BGCWA trained 536 full-time and 1,006 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 equity, restorative justice and 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.

Two versions of the training were provided, one for our full-time staff leadership and one for our part-time youth workers.

In addition to certifying over 1,500 staff in PAX Tools over two years, BGCWA also provided continuing education sessions to all staff who had already completed their initial PAX Tools training in year one. 398 staff completed a continuing education course with PAXIS in Year 2.

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:

*“Our club has grown in our PAX utilization this year as we have implemented many of the tools we learned from the training into our daily programming and group work. For example, when a group is about to clean up and rotate, a staff will use beat the timer and set a goal for the kids to beat. We also commonly utilize finding the mystery item while cleaning up. A staff favorite is kudos notes, which allow staff to give recognition to kids and other staff, which makes them feel good about themselves and others. These notes also go home to parents which helps us foster better parent relations. In the last 6+ months, our club has really started to utilize “Shared Vision”. This is one of my favorite PAX tools to use.” – **Snohomish County***

*“Our organization has embraced PAX and has trained all of our staff. Although we continue to learn and improve on our implementation of PAX tools, which include using the harmonica for getting attention, using the PAX Vision posters in every space/every day and introducing the concepts to our families so the members can have consistency between home and Club, it’s already contributing to a more positive Club culture.” – **Whatcom County***



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 60,000 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 enhance relationships between Club members and staff, strengthen Club to family connections, and reinforce the work already done by the educators and support staff among 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 partners 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 prioritized re-building 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 staff 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.

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. Over the course of two years, family nights provided 24,500 Club kids and their families educational materials and community resources as these events frequently serve as opportunities to connect Club families to a variety of partners that outreach to our Clubs. These include 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.



SEL tools utilized in Boys & Girls Clubs of the Columbia Basin BSS office and a dedicated Club quiet room.

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 training to youth workers across WA state. Collectively, our partners trained over 1,300 youth-serving staff, reaching an additional 20,000 kids and teens.

01 Washington State Alliance of YMCAs (Years 1 & 2)

YMCAs of WA also partnered with PAXIS Institute to equip staff with PAX Tools for Human Services training. Over 313 YMCA staff received access to 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 youth, with 2/3 feeling very confident to implement the very next day. YMCAs of WA will continue to partner with BGCWA in Year 3 to bring this critical training to more staff.

02 Big Brothers Big Sisters in Washington (Years 1 & 2)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound organized training and trauma informed care workshops 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 328 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, Compassion without Fatigue, Reimagining Resilience and JEDI classes with Caprice Collins.

03 CISWA and SOWA (Year 1)

Communities In Schools in WA (CISWA) 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 eight training sessions in Kent, Yakima, Puyallup, Pasco, Walla Walla, Wenatchee, Bellingham, and Spokane, reaching a total of 157 staff.

School's Out Washington (SOWA) provided funding for 81 staff and volunteers from the following organizations: Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Engagement in Omak, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, and Seattle's Chinese Information Service Center, to receive trauma informed care training specific to the cultural needs of their community.

Stories of Impact

Club organizations provided narrative reports sharing qualitative results of their individual accomplishments in Years 1 and 2.

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 a caring adult who knew how to get him the help he needed.” – **Spokane County***



Club youth celebrate diverse cultures of their peers at Boys & Girls Clubs of Benton and Franklin Counties' Multicultural Family Night



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 these past two years 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.

"During the latter part of the school year, a young kindergarten boy underwent a noticeable shift from being lively to becoming consistently sad, coinciding with significant personal challenges. It was discovered that he missed his biological father, compounded by undisclosed medical issues initially unknown to his mother. This emotional turmoil was reflected in declining grades at school. Observations of his behavior by the Behavioral Support Specialist revealed changes in attitude and communication patterns. Recognizing the need for comprehensive support, a wrap-around approach was implemented. The BSS's careful observations and interactions were pivotal in identifying the need for adjustments to the boy's medication regimen. The BSS was able to communicate with the mother which prompted her to take him to the doctor for further evaluation and a new medical care plan. As a result of these interventions, the boy gradually returned to his usual energetic and positive self. This success underscores the critical role of the BSS in advocating for and supporting the child's well-being, as their proactive efforts were essential in improving his condition and fostering a supportive environment for his emotional and academic growth."

– Columbia Basin

"A year and a half ago, Nate faced overwhelming challenges with school, his home life, and mental health issues, leading to his hospitalization.

Throughout this difficult time, our support staff supported him from start to finish, never giving up. Witnessing Nate's journey from healing to learning to cope, and now thriving, has been nothing short of miraculous. He is now deeply involved in Club life, volunteers regularly, has made good friends, and has exciting plans for his future. After attending the Great Futures breakfast, Nate expressed his interest in running for Youth of the Year."

– Olympic Peninsula

Year 3 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 Empower teens via a statewide implementation of teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA). Club staff will become trained tMHFA facilitators and train Club teens to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health or substance-use challenges among their friends and peers.









Continuous Quality Improvement

- 01 Partner with **Foundry10**, a philanthropic education research organization, to conduct a Club Kinship Study. This study will focus on learning how the MHPP influences (1) connection and sense of belonging and (2) social-emotional skill development among members. Results will advance our understanding of practices that foster connectedness within our Clubs.

- 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.

Contact

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Teens at Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington develop a sense of purpose and confidence by volunteering to help younger Club youth with activities such as reading.

Citations:

PAXIS Institute. (2024). PAX Tools: Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State 2022-2024. Tucson, AZ.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America. (2024). National Youth Outcomes Initiative, 2024 WA State Results. Atlanta, GA.