

The Care-to-Share Network

Facilitated by the Children and Family Research Network (CFRN) at UNC-Greensboro and the Family Journeys Co-Lab at UNC-CH and Funded by the Carolina Seminar Series through UNC (website: <https://tarheels.live/caretoshare>)

WHO ARE WE?

In the 1980s, university scholars across the research triangle created a community for training and research that contributed to the birth of Developmental Science - now a rich multi-disciplinary field with implications for children, youth, families, and those who serve them. Building on these roots, we formed the Care-to-Share network. Care-to-Share is an academic-community partnership designed to **synthesize diverse perspectives** on issues impacting child and youth welfare and to **communicate lessons learned** with key stakeholders regarding pressing concerns, prioritized needs, acquired strengths, available resources, and required supports.

To fulfill this mission, Care-to-Share gathers researchers and community providers (including teachers, policy advocates, health care providers, and others) to meet repeatedly throughout the academic year and to exchange views on a pressing issue in child welfare, to examine this issue from many perspectives, and to synthesize what the group has learned for broader dissemination.

WHAT WE LEARNED?

Spurred by the pressing need to respond to the current developmental crises impacting youth in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we focused the first year of this seminar on using a strengths-based approach to understand and support youth in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and intertwined, co-occurring crises. "Youth" was broadly defined as tweens to young adults (roughly 10-24), though viewed their experiences through a broadly developmental lens – asking questions about how the pandemic might impact these youth as the young adults of tomorrow and tomorrow's youth - the children of today. Our goal was to

identify nuances regarding the challenges youth, to varying degrees, experienced during the pandemic as well as the strengths they have used or developed to cope with those challenges, both as individuals and as members of broader families, communities, and contexts – particularly regarding the twinned issues of mental health and thriving or wellness.

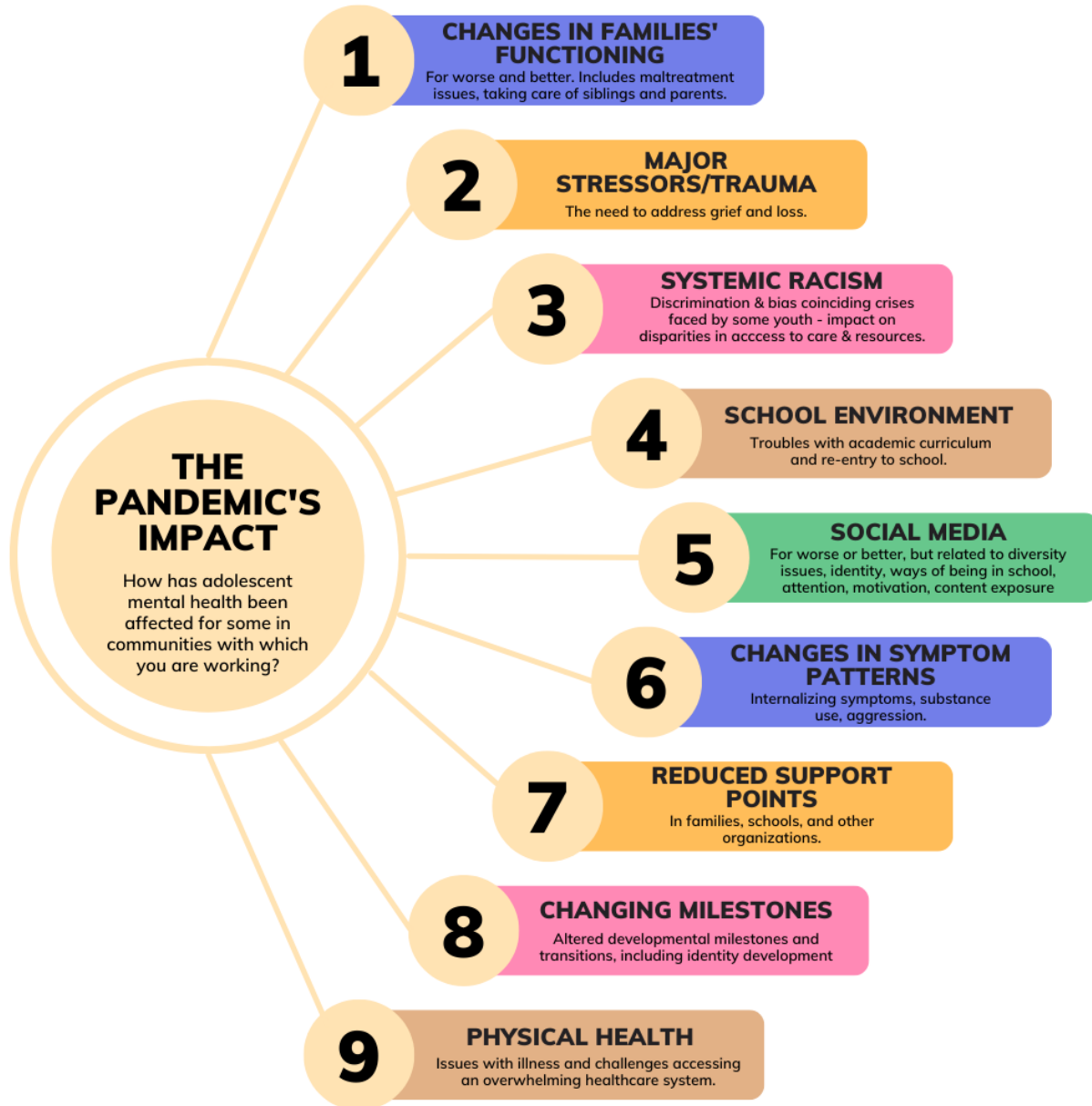
Across the 2021-2022 academic year, our group of 27 scholars and community partners met on three occasions in which we worked collaboratively to answer three questions during a constantly changing landscape for understanding the impact of the pandemic on youth functioning.

1. How is the pandemic impacting adolescent mental health in the communities with which you are working? (9/28/21: Shortly after many youths returned to school and the delta virus began to rise.)
2. What are the strengths and supports or silver linings experienced by youth in the pandemic? And how do the contexts in which youth live impact their experiences? (11/16/22: When infection rates began to recede once again before the holidays and youth were beginning to receive vaccines.)
3. What types of resources, policies, programs, materials, and practices are needed to support youth mental health at this time? (3/25/22: After the omicron variant lead to skyrocketing rates.)

Here we summarize themes from small groups who met during our working meetings to address each of these questions and offer next steps in supporting youth as the pandemic continues to impact their lives.

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Across community and academic partners, significant impacts of the pandemic on children, adolescents and families included all the following areas.

Key targets for intervention suggested by this group focused on the “what”, “where” and “who” of addressing youth mental health.

Suggestions for needed intervention include ‘one-shot wonders’, ‘rational choices’, ‘long-shot dreams’, and ‘darlings’.

IMPORTANT TARGETS

What types of resources, policies, programs, materials, and practices are needed to support youth mental health at this time?

1

What

- Stress
- Social connection
- Social skills
- "Natural" resilience
- Feeling "safe"
- Pandemic Mental Health Psycho-education
- Compassion & self-compassion

2

Where

- After-school programming
- Community embedded programs
- Parenting and caretaker respite
- Access to virtual services
- Bridging schools and parents
- Within-school curriculum

3

Who

- Youth from marginalized groups - particularly Black and Brown youth and LGBTQ+ youth
- Youth who experienced challenges prior to the pandemic
- Care for the caretakers - teachers, health professionals, youth providers, etc.



What do we need?

One-shot wonders

- Resource provision (pre-made dinners, hygiene products)
- Tutoring
- Information hubs for parents
- Youth summit to hear their voices
- Teach Two Things: Compassion & Self-Compassion in the classroom
- More wellness days



Rational choices

- Game libraries
- Reassessing school curriculum



Long-shot dreams

- More resources for providers
- Creating community partnership hubs
- Using existing school-based family interventions with an evidence base



Darlings

- Programs to increase outdoor community engagement
- Investing in outdoor spaces to prepare for the next wave



What is coming up in 2022-2023?

This year we will focus on resilience and recovery in children, youth, families and the institutions who support them. We invite anyone interested in attending an upcoming event or to be an academic or community partner to reach out to us. To register or learn more, visit us at <https://tarheels.live/caretoshare>.

PRESENTATION AND GROUP ENGAGEMENT EVENT:

Resilience and Recovery for Youth and Children in the Time of COVID. 10/28/22 3:00-4:30pm

Dr. Andrea Hussong (Family Journeys Co-Lab, UNC-CH) will present on the work of the Care-to-Share Network and on Resilience and Recovery for Youth and Children in the time of COVID. The presentation will be in-person on the UNC-Greensboro campus and livestreamed to any interested participants. Because we value community engagement and networking, we will spend time after the presentation in conversation with one another (both in-person and via zoom), with a reception to follow. The event is free and open to all academic or community members, though registration is required for purposes of internet security for those attending virtually.

CARE-TO-SHARE WORKING GROUP MEETING: Location TBD. November 2022.

A goal of the Care-to-Share network is to distill lessons from our academic and community partnerships through care-to-share events throughout the year and to disseminate those lessons back to the broader community. This working group, led by Dr. Andrea Hussong, will serve to envision and create dissemination materials that will serve this purpose for our 2022-2023 year. If you are interested in being part of these efforts, reach out to Andrea Hussong at ctsnc@unc.edu.

COMMUNITY PARTNER FIELD TRIP: Destination TBD.

December 2022. As part of the Care-to-Share Network, we provide opportunities for academic researchers to visit on-site with community partners already engaged in or interested in pursuing collaborative research. Participation in these events is limited out of respect for our community partners. Partners will present on their work, strengths, and challenges; provide an orientation to the physical space and resources of the organization when appropriate; and engage with scholars in question and answer sessions. More information on our partner for December and the opportunity to register to participate will be made available shortly.

Thanks to our 2021-2022 Care-to-Share Working Group Members

Adam Miller, PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill & RTI,
Adrianna Richards, Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Amanda Haik, Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Andrea Hussong, PhD, Clinical/Developmental Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Anna Austin, PhD, Maternal and Child Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
April Harris Britt, PhD, Clinical Psychology, Private Practice
Bridget L. Cheeks, PhD, Human Development & Family Studies, University of North Carolina at Greensboro,
Cassandra R. Davis, PhD, Public Policy, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Gabriela Livas Stein, PhD, Clinical/Developmental Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro,
Jason deBruyn, NC Public Radio - WUNC
Jennifer Coffman, PhD, Human Development & Family Studies, University of North Carolina at Greensboro,
Jennifer Dunlap, 6th grade teacher
Joe Sircar, Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Juan Prandoni, PhD, Clinical Psychologist & Training Director, El Futuro, Inc.
Karen Appleyard Carmody, PhD, Center for Child & Family Health & Duke University Medical Center
Kayla Fike, PhD, Education and Developmental Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Kelly Sullivan, PhD, Center for Child & Family Health & Duke University Medical Center
La-Mine Perkins, Assistant Director of Community Engagement, NC Child
Laura Windham, MD, Pediatrician, Private Practice
Maria Black, New Hanover Bilingual Lead Parent Liaison
Megan Hughes, STEM Diversity Program Manager, UNC Institute for the Environment
Michael A. Hemphill, PhD, Kinesiology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Michaeline Jensen, PhD, Clinical/Developmental Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Morgan T. Brown, Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Renita Webb, PhD, NC Child Act
Shauna Cooper, PhD, Developmental Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Yasmin Rico, MSW, NC DHHS