A Crisis in the Classroom

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Many people in active addiction are also parents.

Little is known about what teachers are experiencing in the midst of the opioid epidemic.

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What are WV public school teachers’ experiences with the opioid epidemic in their classrooms?

Some students see drug addiction as a normal way of life. It is hard to steer students towards a brighter future of learning when the new “normal” is living in the midst of an opioid epidemic where education is not valued. Some students are so fixated on “survival” that learning is not a priority for them.

Why Do Teachers Need Additional Training and Support?

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90% reported feeling less than very confident supporting children with parents/caregivers who use substances

90% of teachers rely on colleagues for support

72% of teachers have not received training on working with children affected by addiction

54% of teachers have little to no knowledge regarding addiction

What Is Happening in the Classrooms?

76% reported that suppressing anger was an extremely common behavior in their classrooms, but only 20% felt extremely equipped to handle it

68% reported that low motivation to achieve was an extremely common behavior in their classrooms, but only 16% felt extremely equipped to handle it

Over 70% reported an increase in students impacted by substance abuse in the home

75% reported feeling somewhat or not at all equipped to interact with a parent or caregiver who has an addiction

49% indicated their community was impacted more by the opioid epidemic compared to neighboring communities

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35% of teachers reported they feel frequently or always “burnt out”

What Did We Do?

Who are the Teachers?

~2,600 Total number of teachers who responded

86% Female

49% Elementary teachers

17% Special education teachers

62% Have more than 10 years of teaching experience

55% Have a master’s degree with additional certificates

122-item anonymous survey

Survey sent to public schools teachers from the State Department of Education

Teachers were also recruited through social media

Data collection occurred from January 2019 through March 2019

Training

• Develop a training module for teachers that includes:
  • Understanding addiction
  • Effects of addiction on family systems & parent interaction strategies
  • Classroom strategies for working with children from addicted homes

Support

• Establish a peer-support structure for teachers.
  Options include:
  • A buddy system approach with teachers who are trained together
  • A mentoring system
  • Regular, facilitated meetings to discuss experiences and strategies

Resources

• Provide concrete resources to teachers, including:
  • HELP4WV cards
  • Information about Al-Anon and Nar-Anon groups
  • National Association for Children of Addiction (NACoA) Kit for Educators

It is stressful to feel like I have to be ‘all things to all people.’ Teachers are trained to teach, not be social workers or counselors. But the things some students are dealing with demand so much more than simple teaching.

Funding provided by the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute (NIH grant # 2U54GM104942-02)