

**Colorado Educator Support Project**  
**Final Evaluation Report - Academic Year 22-23**

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## Highlights and Summary

- **Across all the programs, the Colorado Educator Support Project had contact with ~1,100 educators from over 44 different school districts or school organizations.**
- **The Well-Being Support Line received 242 calls/texts from 176 different callers.**
- **We provided 408 individual mental health sessions to 132 different educators.**
  - Satisfaction with this service was high with 91% of the educators reporting the service helped them better manage their mental health.
- **We provided 16 workshops/group sessions to 596 educators.**
  - This also included specialized services for two schools with crisis events.
- **Colorado Educator Support Project had national media attention, with news stories by Scripps, Christian Science Monitor, and Chalkbeat Magazine.**
  - There were also several local media stories including Colorado Public Radio, KDVR and KKTV television stations.
- **Colorado Educator Support presented at several conferences.**
  - These included presentations at Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE); Colorado Education Association (CEA); Colorado Department of Education (CDE); the Association of School Nurses; and the Early Childhood Mental Health Council conferences.
- **Educators are reporting high levels of burnout and stress.**
  - On the Burnout Inventory, 57% of the educators scored moderate to high levels of burnout.
  - A majority of the educators (79%) reported feeling supported by their coworkers. However, they felt less support from administration (50%) and by the community (37%).
  - Despite significant stressors, 72% of the respondents felt they were effective educators during the school year.

## **Introduction**

In October 2020, the CU Department of Psychiatry began offering a Well-Being Support Line (WBSL) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This service was offered specifically to Colorado educators due to the stressors regarding safety of in-person learning, rapidly changing plans related to remote learning, and additional work due to hybrid models of learning. The purpose of this service was to offer mental health support and targeted resources. Over the course of the 20-21 academic year, the WBSL received over 200 calls from Colorado Educators.

As the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions continued into the 21-22 academic year, there was an ongoing need for this service and mental health support. The Colorado Education Association, the Office of Behavioral Health, the Colorado State Legislature and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment provided funding to support and grow this program. The Educator Support Project was expanded in Fall 2021 to continue the call/text WBSL, but also added group support, psychoeducational workshops, individual support sessions, and a self-paced mental health educational program.

In the 22-23 academic school year, as schools returned to in-person learning without pandemic restrictions, educators still required support as they attempt to navigate a “return to normal.” As classrooms looked different this year, the mental health needs of educators shifted as well. We were less likely to receive calls/texts needing immediate help, but requests for individual support sessions remained high, especially as educators shared other sources of mental health care was difficult to navigate, reporting EAP services often had wait lists and appointments in community care was not affordable, even with insurance. There were more requests for workshops or trainings around recovering from the pandemic or building resilience as well support in helping their students, including secondary trauma trainings.

This year, we also provided in-depth support to two schools impacted by gun violence. For both schools, we provided specialized care including all staff workshops, trauma specific individual treatment, support around staff relationships, and helping both schools develop staff resilience plans. Between the two schools, we provided over 100 hours of specialized consulting and mental health care.

This evaluation report outlines a description of these services, summarizes the ways in which they have been used throughout this academic year, and reports on levels of satisfaction with this program. Data regarding burnout, hope, and their role as educators also provide some insight into the emotional wellbeing of the educators this program serves.

## **Methods**

The data for this report includes information only from the 22-23 academic school year, which included any services received between 8/1/22 and 6/2/23. The data for this report was gathered from two different sources. The service data, including the numbers and types of services used,

was collected using an internal data management system. After each call/text, support session, or group/workshop, staff entered the data about the participants. To determine satisfaction with the services provided, we sent out a survey to anyone who had provided an e-mail address as part of registering for any of our services. In early May 2022, we sent out 154 e-mails with a link to our online survey. We received 37 responses, a response rate of 24%.

## **Service Descriptions, Usage and Outcomes**

### **Colorado Educator Support Website**

**Description.** The website ColoradoEducatorSupport.com served as a project hub to provide information about program services. Information about the support line, individual support services, workshops, and additional resources were available through this site. In addition, the website offered specific tips around the holidays, return to school, and other timely mental health topics which were periodically updated.

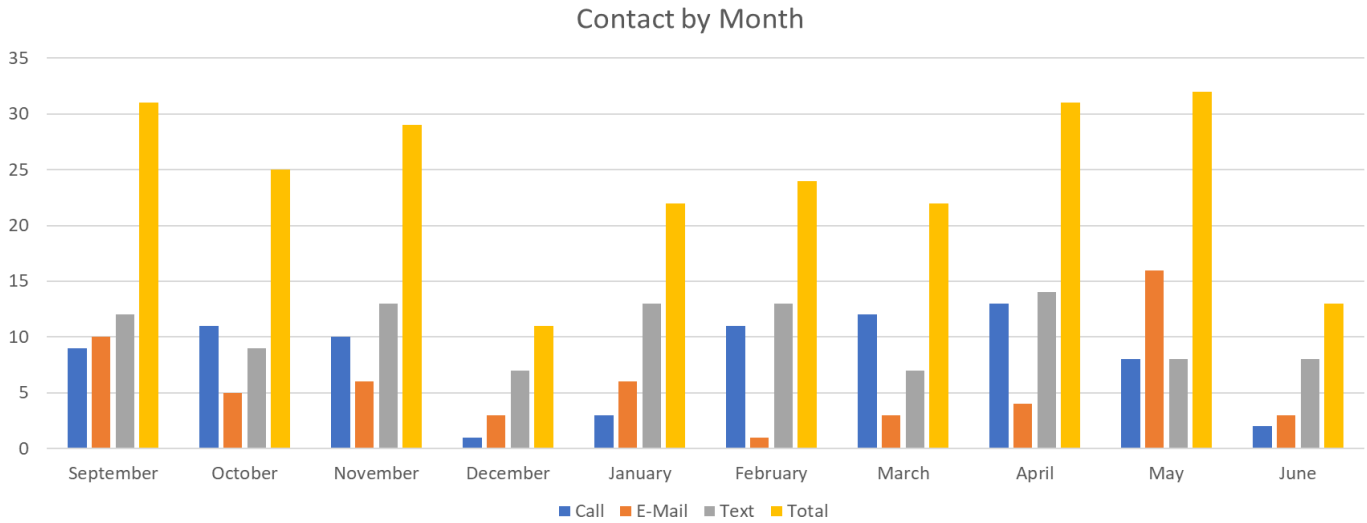
**Usage.** The website received 11,586 views from 5,293 unique viewers. Website traffic was notably increased in days following news coverage or social media reference to the project. Usage also remained consistent throughout the academic year, with more traffic in April and May than in previous years. Educators continued to use the online self-paced program, with Burnout, Depression, and Resilience were the top viewed videos.

### **Well-Being Support Line (WBSL)**

**Description.** The WBSL is a 6-day a week call/text support line in which educators can have immediate contact with someone to receive support, talk through concerns and/or get connected to other programs. The WBSL is staffed by Master's level students in mental health education programs and supervised by licensed mental health clinicians. This year, there were fewer requests for immediate crisis support and more people reaching out via text and e-mail

**Usage.** The call line received 242 total contacts, with 80 via telephone call, 103 via text message, and 58 via e-mail. The calls were consistent in the fall, with a slight dip in the winter. However, there was also a surprising difference in the pattern of calls this year than in the past. Typically, there are a lot of calls at the start of the school year, through November, and then calls

tend to decrease. However, this year, there were more calls at the end of the school year, with April and May being some of the busiest months.



The support line was primarily used by classroom teachers (76%). The next highest group of callers were school health/mental health care staff (4%); support staff (4%); and administration (6%). The other 10% included calls from Early Childhood workers, those who work in Higher Education, and other off-campus supports. The calls/texts represented educators from 44 unique school districts or schools. Of those calls that came from school districts, 70% were from the Denver Metro area (including Denver, Jefferson County, Cherry Creek, Littleton, Adams County, and Douglas County); 12% were from a non-Metro urban area (Colorado Springs, Boulder, Ft. Collins, and Pueblo); and 15% of the calls were from those in rural school districts. Private schools or non-district support services make up the remaining 3%.

**Outcomes.** The callers received support, validation, and coping strategies from the staff during the call, but only 24% did not request any further services beyond the initial call. Instead, in addition to receiving support on the call, many of the callers were also referred to ongoing services, with 71% of the callers also scheduling appointments for individual support sessions or received help in accessing care through outside referrals (10%). Approximately 10% of callers wanted to know more about the program or have marketing materials sent. There were also 10% of callers who were unable to be contacted after an initial call or text.

**WBSL Satisfaction.** On the satisfaction survey, participants were asked to indicate level of agreement with positively worded satisfaction items such as “Services helped me to manage my work environment”. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 4 being ‘strongly agree’ the WBSL received an average overall score of 3.6 and a median overall score of 3.6. Qualitative statements support this, with several positive comments about the help received and gratitude for access to this service.

## Individual Support Sessions

**Description.** The individual support sessions remain a very popular service. To be able to serve the entire state, all sessions are provided via telehealth videoconferencing. Individual support sessions are provided by either licensed mental health providers, or trainees in social work, psychology, and the psychiatric nurse practitioner program who are supervised by licensed mental health providers. These are not therapy sessions but rather an opportunity for educators to meet with the same crisis counselor up to 5 times to talk about stresses related to work, home, or any other concerns. Educators can typically be seen for their first session within the same week, which is a particular strength of this service. Recognizing the difficulty educators may have in leaving work during the middle of the day, all individual support sessions are held either after school or on Saturday mornings.

**Usage.** From August 2022 through June 2023, 408 sessions have been provided to 132 unique educators. The average number of sessions per educator was 3.1 in the 2022-2023 academic year. Of those educators, 40 engaged in 1 support session, 24 had 2 sessions, 17 had 3 sessions, 12 had 4 sessions, and 35 had 5 or more sessions. This includes educators who began sessions in the summer of 2022 and those currently being seen. Four educators completed all their sessions in Spanish.

**Outcomes/Satisfaction.** Thirty people responded to the evaluation survey regarding the individual support services. Among those who responded to the evaluation, 83% agreed it was easy to get appointments fit their schedules. Overall satisfaction with the individual services was very good. The majority of responding educators said they would refer others to the support sessions (91%), that the service helped them better manage their overall mental health (83%), and that their goals for the sessions were met (74%). Several educators specifically mentioned the helpfulness of this service in written comments.

- *“This has been life changing for me. I can't thank this program and my counselor enough.”*
- *“Would have loved to be able to schedule with the counselor I was seeing after the services I received through this program- even if it were through my insurance or at a cost to me- we really clicked!”*
- *“I am so appreciative to have had this offered.”*

Lack of time to engage in sessions and/or scheduling difficulties were the most frequently mentioned barriers to using the service. Respondents have also noted that with the end of the pandemic, they would appreciate an in-person option.

## Workshops, Group Sessions, and Seminars

**Description.** The group therapy sessions and workshops were conducted in a different way this year due to many schools returning completely to in-person learning with minimal to no COVID precautions remaining. As a result, the providers from Colorado Educator Support were

able to go into the schools and work directly with the educators in-person. The in-school support workshops that providers were able to conduct this year included a variety of topics such as: managing return to school expectations, secondary trauma, and a series of group support sessions for educators who wanted to talk about the impacts of school violence and other related themes.

In addition, the Colorado Educator Support Project also provided an individualized, in-depth program for two different schools. For one of the schools, CESP worked throughout the year with a school leadership team using a trauma recovery model. We provided several individual and group sessions to help the team work together more effectively through building healthy communication skills and a foundation of understanding rooted in common goals. Second, we provided ongoing supportive care after a crisis situation at a different school, which included workshops for teachers to help support students, several debrief sessions for staff to process the crisis, trauma specific individual support offerings for affected teachers, and a resilience workshop to discuss recovery after crisis. In total CESP spent more than 100 hours providing direct mental health care and consultation to these two programs.

The Colorado Educator Support Project also helped four schools conduct their own resilience workshops and activities. This included helping a middle school to create an area for staff to exercise, helping an elementary school develop a meditation space for staff, working with a High School to celebrate staff birthdays, and providing support for an end of year networking opportunity for a charter school staff.

**Usage.** There were 596 total participants across 16 sessions. There has been more request for in-person and on-site groups, which is why there were more participants and groups in previous years.

### **Professional Development**

While the primary goal of this project was to make mental health and crisis support available, there was also a learning component related to educator well-being and mental health. As such, participating in some of these services allowed educators to obtain professional development credits. There were 19 educators who received PD credits for completing the online modules.

In addition to those receiving Professional Development credits for attending a workshop or completing the online modules, there were two educators who participated in the CEA/Adams State Graduate Credit program. These educators used the modules and workshops as a training opportunity and received credit to count toward their ongoing education.

### **Emotional Wellbeing of Educators Using these Services**

In the survey, educators were asked a series of questions about their overall well-being, career goals, burnout symptoms, and hope for the future.

### Burnout Level of Educators in this Program

Burnout levels were assessed using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory<sup>1</sup>, a self-report burnout measure that includes subscales measuring disengagement and exhaustion. Higher ratings indicate higher levels of burnout. Typically, any score over 35 indicates an “at-risk” level, while scores greater than or equal to 44 indicate a moderate to high level of burnout.<sup>1</sup> The mean level of burnout among educators in this sample was 45.12 out of 64 (SD = 8.1) with a range of 27-60 . In this sample, 43% of the educators were in the low range (score < 44), 57% were in the moderate to high range (score ≥ 44). Using the threshold score of 35, 89% of educators scored in the “at-risk” range.

Level	Score range	Frequency	Percent
Low	<44	12	42.8
Moderate	44-59	15	53.6
High	>59	1	3.6

### Perceived Social Support

A majority of educators perceived social support from their peers, and roughly half perceived support from their school administration and parents. While there was more perceived support from parents, perceptions of community support and support from their administrators were lower this year than in previous years.

. Perceived Social Supports	N (%) indicating “agree” or “strongly agree”
I have felt supported by administration this school year	14 (50.0%)
I have felt supported by parents this school year	16 (57.1%)
I have felt supported by other educators this school year	22 (78.6%)
I have felt supported by the community this school year	10 (37.0%)

### Anticipated Career Outcomes

Despite significant stressors, it is encouraging that 20 of 28 (71.4%) educators responding to the project evaluation felt they were effective educators during the school year.

Educators were asked whether they were currently looking for another job and about their expectations of remaining in the education profession for 1 year and 5 years. Of the respondents, 60.7% (17/28) indicated they have actively looked for a new job over the past 12 months. Of those looking for another job, 65% (11/17) indicated they looked within education, 41% (7/17) indicated they looked outside of education but ultimately decided to stay within education and 41% (7/17) indicated they tried to find a new job but did not find comparable job options. Four



educators indicated they had left their job in education. Many educators anticipated remaining in education with 82% (23/28) expecting they would still be in an educator position in 1 year and 50% (14/28) expecting they would be in education 5 years out. Among this year's sample, a more educators left their jobs in education, compared to data from the previous year.

### **Conclusion**

A primary goal of the Educator Support Project is to provide mental health support to Colorado educators. Doing so may facilitate a healthier workforce that is also better able to support students. In addition, support from coworkers, administration, and the community may be a way to help mitigate some of the burnout that educators feel.

While this program was created to help support educators through the pandemic, many of the concerns expressed through these services are representative of the ongoing stressors educators face. Staffing shortages, disruptive student behaviors, feeling as though the community doesn't care about their safety, and feeling overworked are all issues that will likely continue to need to be addressed even after mask wearing, remote-learning, and quarantines are over.

Educators are an important part of our communities, and their impact on the economic and health outcomes of individuals and communities is invaluable. But given their reports, education remains a very challenging profession. To support them and the students and families they serve, educators may benefit from ongoing mental health services such as these.

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<sup>i</sup> Tipa, R. O., Tudose, C., & Pucarea, V. L. (2019). Measuring Burnout Among Psychiatric Residents Using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) Instrument. *Journal of medicine and life*, 12(4), 354–360. <https://doi.org/10.25122/jml-2019-0089>