



**Colorado Educator Support Project**  
**Final Evaluation Report - Academic Year 23-24**

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Prepared for project stakeholders including the  
Colorado Education Association and the Colorado State Legislature

## Highlights and Summary

- **This year, we served ~1600 educators from 48 different school districts or programs.**
  - All services remain 100% free to all educators.
- **The website had 15,879 views from 7,587 unique visitors.**
  - We added three new modules and a monthly blog to the website.
- **The Well-Being Support Line had ~500 contacts from 325 unique individuals.**
  - The call line had 288 call/text contacts from 192 different educators.
  - There were also 199 email-initiated contacts from 133 individuals.
- **We completed 467 individual mental health sessions with 142 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 40 workshops/group sessions to 1109 educators**
  - Workshops included educator resilience, work/life balance, managing burnout, and secondary trauma.
  - Educators found the workshop helpful, with 96% of participants stating the workshop met their goals and 97% stating they would refer it to others.
  - Workshops were provided around the state including half-day workshops in Montrose, Lamar, and Durango.
- **We received an award from Great Education Colorado**
  - CEA nominated the program as an Educator Wellness Champion.
- **We are receiving national recognition including:**
  - Scholarly Article in Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health
  - Presentation at a national School Mental Health Conference in Baton Rouge
  - Presentation at Association of Clinical Social Workers Conference in Pittsburg
  - Featured story in the national newspaper *Christian Science Monitor*
- **Educators continue to report high levels of burnout and stress.**
  - On the Burnout Inventory, 42% of the educators scored moderate to high levels of burnout. This is lower than we had seen in previous years.
  - A majority of the educators (89%) reported feeling supported by their coworkers. However, they felt less support from administration (54%).
  - Educators continue to look other kinds of work, with 51% reporting actively looking for a new job.

## **Introduction, History, and Program Updates**

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. As the pandemic plays less of a role in classrooms, we have shifted work to provide more support around managing burnout and improving wellness. We have just completed our fourth year of providing mental health support to educators across the state and have provided care to over 6,000 educators since the start of the program.

In the 23-24 academic school year, there were still a number of educators wanting individual support. Due to wait lists or difficulty locating providers who accept insurance, educators report having a hard time finding mental health providers. We continued to fill that gap with a focus on immediate support through the call line and individual support sessions.

Although call line use and individual supports remained about the same as in past years, we had more requests for workshops this year. Schools and districts requested trainings aimed at wellness, prevention, and more universal support for all educators. In response to this, we provided 40 workshops, serving over 1100 educators across the entire state.

As some of the needs have shifted since the pandemic, we also added new modules to our online program, including Managing Secondary Trauma, Conflict and Communication, and Work/Life Balance. We updated our website to add a blog, added a link to media and news reports, and added a page to share research findings.

Fortunately, we did not respond to any major crises this year, but we continued to provide ongoing support and recovery for those educators impacted by school related violence. We provided training on a crisis response model to two different district level teams. We also helped support district level crisis teams, providing three grief specific debrief sessions.

Our program received recognition and nationwide support. The program was a featured story in the nationwide newspaper Christian Science Monitor. We presented our model for supporting educators at the National School Mental Health Conference in December. We presented our website as a technology-based intervention at the Association of Clinical Social Workers in April. We published an academic paper in the Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health around the impact of teaching during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

What started as a call line to respond to pandemic stress has evolved into a state-wide, comprehensive, wellness and mental health program specific to those who work in education.

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<sup>1</sup> Links to the article and news stories can be found on our website here: [Media & Reports – Colorado Educator Support](#)

## **Program Evaluation**

To better understand how these services are received, we send out a survey to anyone who has used our services in the past year. This evaluation report outlines a description of services provided, 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, support, and 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 23-24 academic school year, which included any services received between 6/1/23 and 5/31/24. 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 2024, we sent out invitations to participate in an online survey to 365 emails. We received 57 responses for a response rate of 15.6%; the rate was lower than in 2022-2023 but a greater number of educators responded and there was a greater level of completion compared to previous years.

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

### **Colorado Educator Support Website**

**Description.** The website [www.coloradoeducatorsupport.com](http://www.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.

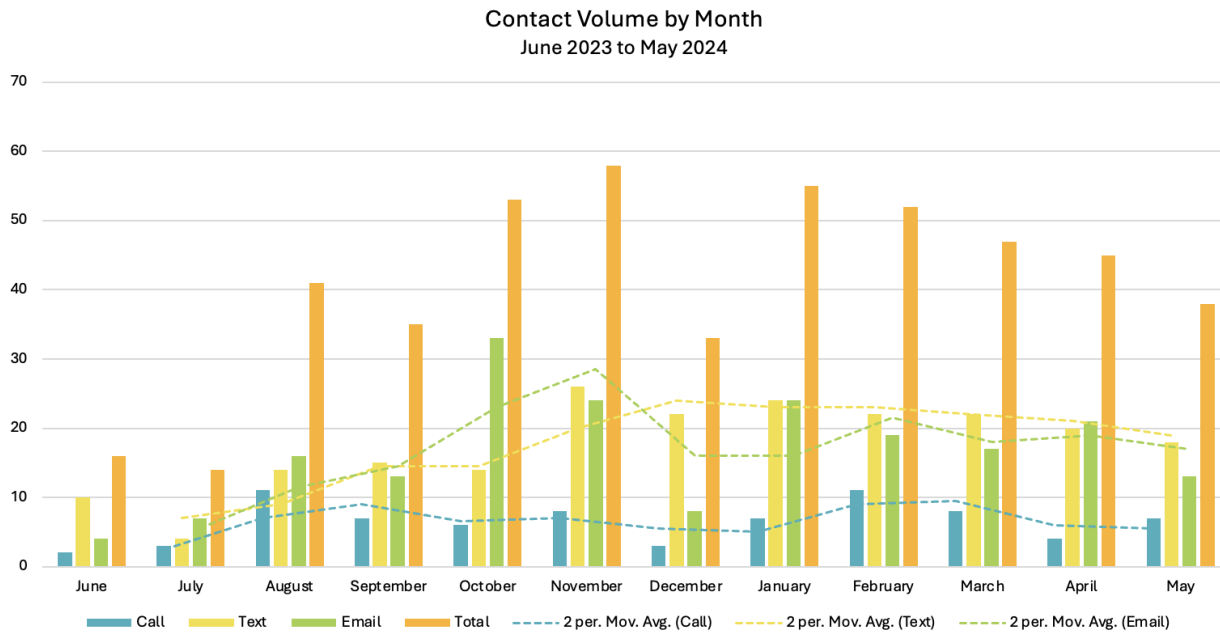
**Usage.** The website received 15,879 views from 7,587 unique viewers. This is an increase from the previous year. “Managing Anxiety” and “Burnout” remain the most popular modules, while the Educator Resilience is the video that is watched most frequently.

### **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 who are

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 Support Line logged 487 contacts (incoming and outgoing) between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024, with 77 via telephone call, 211 via text message, and 199 via e-mail. Call and text volumes were relatively consistent, while email volume tended to be more sporadic. Contact volume was unsurprisingly at its lowest during June and July, when most educators are off or working minimal hours. As with last year, December was the lowest volume seen during the school year, likely as a result of winter break. Unlike previous years, calls were consistently the least used mode of contact, with text and email volumes out pacing in every month. Contact volume was once again quite high in the first part of the school year, but the pattern changed once again in the spring semester. Last year, April and May were some of the busiest months, yet this year January and February were busier but without noticeably significant decreases until May.



The support line was primarily used by classroom teachers (41%). The next highest group of callers were school health/mental health care staff (10%); support staff (10%); and early childhood education (8%). The other roles represented were administration workers, those who work in higher education, and other off-campus supports. Contacts represented educators from 48 unique school districts, Colorado Department of Education, and BOCES. Of those contacts that known to have come from school districts (N=201), 68.2% were from the Denver Metro area; 12.9% were from the Colorado Springs area (Pikes Peak); 6.0% were from Fort Collins area (North Central); and 12.9% of the contacts were from more rural districts [see table below].

CO Dept. of Education Region	Number of Contacts	Districts in Sample
<b>Metro</b>	137 (68.2%)	Adams 12 & 14; Aurora; Boulder; Cherry Creek; Denver; Douglas; Gilpin; Jefferson; Mapleton; Platte Canyon; Westminster
<b>Pikes Peak</b>	26 (12.9%)	Academy 20; Cheyenne Mountain; Districts 11 & 49; Harrison; Lewis Palmer; Peyton; Woodland Park; Widefield
<b>Southwest</b>	12 (6.0%)	Archuleta; Bayfield; Center; Dolores; Durango; Upper Rio Grande
<b>North Central</b>	12 (6.0%)	Greeley 6; St Vrain; Weld RE3-J, RE-5J, RE-8, & RE-9
<b>Northwest</b>	6 (3.0%)	Aspen; Eagle; Salida; Steamboat Springs
<b>Southeast</b>	6 (3.0%)	East Otero; Granada; Trinidad
<b>West Central</b>	2 (1.0%)	Gunnison; Montrose
<b>Northeast</b>	0	

**Outcomes.** The callers received support, validation, and coping strategies from the staff during the call, but only 7.3% 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 61.1% of the contacts resulting in appointments for individual support sessions or received help in accessing care through outside referrals (1.3%). Approximately 17.4% of callers wanted to know more about the program or have marketing materials sent. There were also 13% 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”. Eight individuals provided ratings for the WBSL. 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 3.5 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 receive supervision from a licensed mental health provider. 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, individual support sessions are primarily held either after school or on Saturday mornings.

**Usage.** From June 2023 through May 2024, 467 sessions have been provided to 142 unique educators. The average number of sessions educator was 3 in the 2023-2024 academic year. Of those educators, 46 engaged in 1 support session, 19 had 2 sessions, 17 had 3 sessions, 14 had 4 sessions, and 37 had 5 or more sessions. In addition, to continue to provide ongoing support to educators impacted by school violence, a small number of educators (10) were offered unlimited trauma-focused sessions to process through school based violent events.

**Outcomes/Satisfaction.** Thirteen people responded to the evaluation survey regarding the individual support services. Among those who responded to the evaluation, 85% 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 (90%), that the service helped them better manage their overall mental health (80%), and that their goals for the sessions were met (85%). Several educators specifically mentioned the helpfulness of this service in written comments.

- *“It is a great program! I really appreciate the resources that you are willing to provide for teachers! Thank you, thank you, thank you!”*
- *“The only barrier was myself - once I was compelled to take action, it was easy to connect and get started.”*

Lack of time to engage in sessions and/or scheduling difficulties were the most frequently mentioned barriers to using the service. Though not noted in the survey, multiple individuals over the year have inquired about in person sessions.

### **Workshops, Group Sessions, and Seminars**

**Description.** There was an increase in workshop requests this year, with a focus on wellness and resilience. We offered a combination of online and in-person workshops with a variety of topics including: Educator Resilience, Managing Burnout, Work/Life Balance, Conflict and Communication, and Secondary Trauma. We also offered a monthly process/support group for school nurses.

**Usage.** There were 1109 total participants across 40 sessions.

**Participant Feedback.** Overall, educators found the workshops helpful. In the evaluation feedback surveys, 97% of the educators report the workshops met their goals, 96% report being satisfied with the workshop and 96% report that they would refer it to other educators. Many report hoping to use the skills learned throughout the year, with 97% reporting they believe the workshop will improve both their current and future well-being. Some comments from participants includes:

- *“We were given true tools and not just told to do self-care.”*
- *“This is all great information I can bring back to my school and classroom.”*
- *“All the hands-on learning activities really helped me think about how I can better charge my battery.”*

- *“This was the best, most helpful PD that I have attended in a long time. I think what stood out to me most was feeling affirmed in my experiences. It put a name and reason to things that have been affecting my mental health.”*
- *“I loved being reminded why teaching is so great!”*

### 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. Fifty-seven respondents provided answers to at least part of the survey.

#### Burnout Level of Educators in this Program

Burnout levels were assessed using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OBI)<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>i</sup> Forty-five individuals completed the OBI. The mean level of burnout among educators in this sample was 41.64 out of 64 (SD = 7.5) with a range of 24-56. In this sample, 57.8% of the educators were in the low range (score < 44), 42.2% were in the moderate to high range (score ≥ 44). Using the threshold score of 35, 81.8% of educators scored in the “at-risk” range.

Level	Score range	Frequency	Percent
Low	<44	26	57.8%
Moderate	44-59	19	42.2%
High	>59	0	0%

#### Perceived Social Support

The vast majority of educators reported feeling supported by parents, fellow educators, and the community this year. Just over half felt supported by their administration. This is different than previous years when reported support from parents and the community were much lower. Support from other educators has consistently been the highest.

. Perceived Social Supports	N (%) indicating “agree” or “strongly agree”
I have felt supported by administration this school year	25 (54.3%)
I have felt supported by parents this school year	33 (80.5%)
I have felt supported by other educators this school year	39 (88.6%)
I have felt supported by the community this school year	34 (77.3%)



## Anticipated Career Outcomes

Despite significant stressors, it is encouraging that 34 of 43 (79.1%) educators rating themselves, felt that they were an effective educator this year. Also encouraging, 38 of 41 (92.7%) felt they had a good relationship with their students this year.

Educators were asked whether they were currently looking for another job and about their expectations of remaining in the education profession for 5 years. Of the respondents, 51.1% (24/47) indicated they have actively looked for a new job over the past 12 months. All respondents were asked more specific questions regarding looking for new work as well. Fifteen or 33% indicated they looked within education, 36% (17/47) indicated they looked outside of education but ultimately decided to stay within education, and 26% (12/46) indicated they tried to find a new job but did not find comparable job options. Seven educators indicated they had left their jobs, 5 of whom for a similar job in education. Importantly, of the 24 educators investigating new jobs, 71% were looking outside of education. Many educators anticipated remaining in education with 67.4% (31/46) expecting they would be in education 5 years out.

## Conclusion

A primary goal of the Educator Support Project is to provide mental health support to Colorado educators, in part to develop 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. Burnout levels remain high, with educators always feeling like there is too much to do. 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>