

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent

SUBJECT: EXPLORE THE CREATION OF STUDENT TRAUMA SUPPORT MECHANISMS TO PROVIDE THERAPEUTIC AND COUNSELING SERVICES TO STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE OR WHO HAVE BEEN WITNESSES TO VIOLENCE

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL SERVICES AND STUDENT/SCHOOL SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A U.S. Department of Justice study found that nearly 60 percent of American children are exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their homes and communities. Research has shown that children who are exposed to violence experience long-term effects that may impact all aspects of their lives including emotional, social, and cognitive development. Children exposed to violence are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic disorders; fail or have difficulty in school; and become delinquent or engage in criminal behavior.

As adults we have been focused on finding ways to protect our children and stem violence in our community. We have formed multi-jurisdictional partnerships and task forces designed to provide safe out-of-school activities and to identify children who may be at-risk for a number of reasons; however, we must not forget that the most powerful tool we often have to address childhood trauma and post-traumatic stress is caring human interaction. Currently, this District employs over 1,100 full and part-time counselors, psychologists, and social workers whose function it is to care for students and their needs; however, the issues associated with the type of post-traumatic stress affecting many children in our most fragile schools demands further attention.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to examine our current procedures and protocols for providing assistance to these children who have had their childhood interrupted by tragedy and violence. It is incumbent upon us to reach-out to community partners to assist in this effort and to ensure that the adults in our schools are trained to identify the symptoms of post-traumatic stress so that interventions can be provided. As such, it is our intention to explore the establishment of student trauma support mechanisms to provide therapeutic and counseling services to students who have been victims of violence or who have been witnesses to violence.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse the Superintendent's exploration of the establishment of student trauma support mechanisms to provide therapeutic and counseling services to students who have been victims of violence or who have been witnesses to violence.