

Mental Health & Wellness



**GUIDE
BOOK**

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Supporting youth mental health has become a major focus for youth-serving programs in recent years. Research shows that youth who engage in structured activities outside of the school day can experience reduced anxiety and depression, along with a stronger sense of belonging. To create these positive and supportive environments, program staff need to be equipped with essential knowledge, tools, and resources.

No matter the setting—schools, community centers, after-school programs, clubs, or libraries—the goal remains the same. We aim to create a safe, supportive environment that fosters mental well-being through intentional activities, positive relationships, and a nurturing atmosphere. But how do we achieve this? And how do we ensure our staff are ready for this important mission?

This series will explore the various elements that frontline staff need in their “toolkit” to support youth mental health. Each topic will be presented in multiple formats to suit different training schedules, learning preferences, and timelines—including webinars, podcasts, short videos, and additional resources.

Guidebook Legend



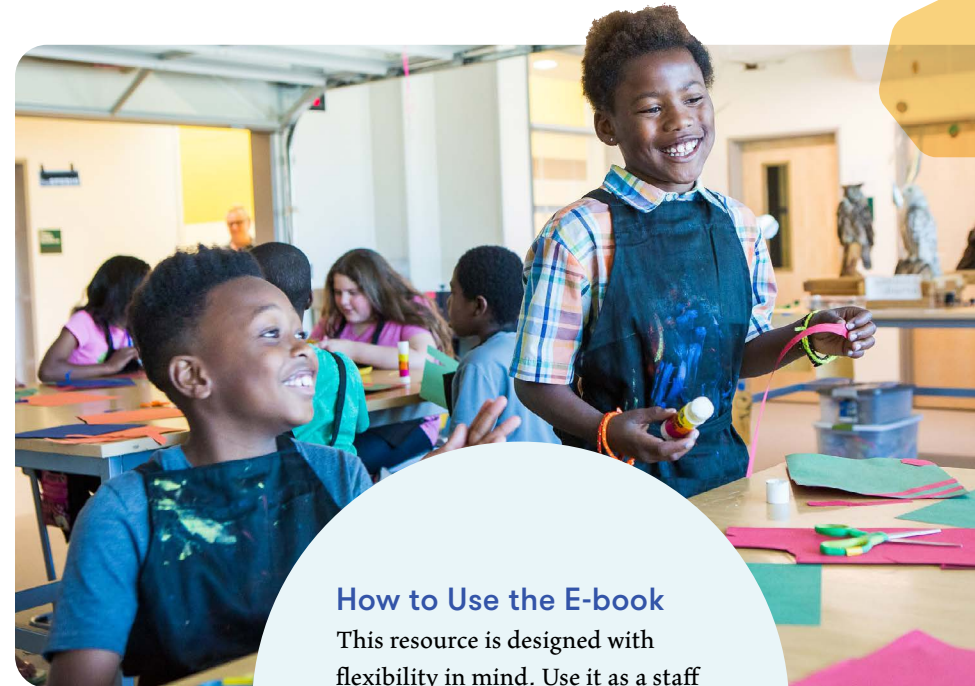
Webinar that provides an overview of the topic



Short video that shares examples related to the topic



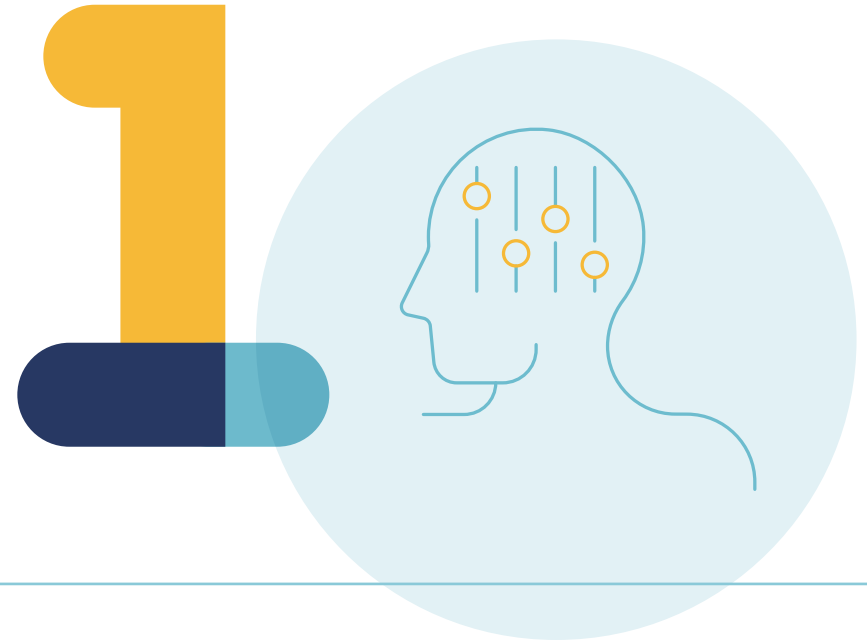
Podcast with staff to expand on topic knowledge



How to Use the E-book

This resource is designed with flexibility in mind. Use it as a staff training template and work through each topic in order or pick and choose topics and content that seem most relevant to you and your staff.

Emotions



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[Naming and Taming Emotions](#) with Dr. Offenwanger:

This video provides practical strategies for identifying and managing emotions effectively. Learn how recognizing and naming emotions is a crucial first step towards emotional regulation. Perfect for out-of-school time program staff, this resource equips you with tools to help young people develop emotional intelligence and resilience.



Short Videos

[Feelings](#): This video provides insights into understanding and expressing emotions effectively. It offers practical tips to help young people articulate their feelings. By using these strategies, you can support emotional development and create a more empathetic environment. Ideal for those dedicated to fostering emotional intelligence and well-being in youth.

[Adult Mindfulness](#): This video introduces mindfulness techniques tailored for adults, focusing on stress reduction and mental clarity. It provides practical exercises that program staff can use to enhance their own well-being. By incorporating these mindfulness practices, you can better support the emotional health of the young people you work with. Ideal for creating a calm and focused environment in your programs.

[Mindfulness Exercise for Kids](#): This video introduces a simple and effective mindfulness exercise designed specifically for children. It guides young viewers through techniques to help them focus, relax, and manage stress. Ideal for program staff, this resource provides practical tools to support the emotional well-being of children in their care. Perfect for fostering a calm and focused environment.



Podcasts

[A Walk Through of a Common Stressful Scenario:](#) This podcast episode explores a typical stressful situation encountered in out-of-school time (OST) programming. It provides practical strategies and insights for program staff to effectively manage and navigate these challenges. By listening, you'll gain valuable tools to enhance your program's resilience and create a more supportive environment for both staff and youth. Ideal for those dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of OST programs.

[Taming Emotions:](#) This podcast episode delves into effective strategies for identifying and managing emotions. It offers practical insights for program staff to help young people develop emotional regulation skills. By implementing these techniques, you can foster a supportive environment that promotes emotional intelligence and resilience. Ideal for those dedicated to enhancing the emotional well-being of youth in their programs.

[How to Determine a Child is Regulated Enough to Talk:](#) This podcast episode provides valuable insights into recognizing when someone is emotionally regulated and ready for a meaningful conversation. It offers practical tips for program staff to identify signs of emotional readiness in young people. By understanding these cues, you can foster more effective and supportive communication. Ideal for those dedicated to enhancing emotional well-being and building trust in their programs.



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Supporting Ourselves & Our Children



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[Supporting Ourselves and Our Children in a Different World](#)

with Dr. Michels: This webinar provides valuable insights into navigating the challenges of today's rapidly changing world. It offers practical strategies for out-of-school time program staff to support both their own well-being and that of the youth they work with. By implementing these approaches, you can foster resilience and adaptability in your programs. Ideal for those committed to creating a supportive and nurturing environment for young people.



Short Videos

[Using Nature to Ground:](#) This video demonstrates how nature can be a powerful tool for grounding and calming the mind. It offers practical exercises that program staff can use to help young people connect with nature and reduce stress. By incorporating these techniques, you can create a more serene and focused environment. Ideal for those dedicated to promoting mental well-being through natural methods.

[Right Brain Left Brain:](#) This video explores the concept of brain lateralization, explaining the differences between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. It provides insights into how each side contributes to various cognitive functions and behaviors. Ideal for program staff, this resource helps in understanding how to better support the diverse learning and thinking styles of young people. Perfect for enhancing educational strategies and fostering a more inclusive environment.

[Yoga for Healing:](#) This video introduces gentle yoga practices designed to promote healing and relaxation. It provides step-by-step guidance on poses and breathing techniques that can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being. Ideal for program staff, this resource offers practical tools to support the physical and emotional health of both staff and the young people they work with. Perfect for integrating mindfulness and wellness into your programs.



Podcasts

[What's the Big Deal with Mindfulness:](#) This podcast episode explores the benefits and importance of mindfulness practices for both youth and adults. It provides practical insights and techniques that program staff can use to incorporate mindfulness into their programs. By understanding and applying these practices, you can enhance the emotional well-being and focus of the young people you work with. Ideal for those committed to fostering a calm and supportive environment.

[How to Train Our Brains with Three Good Things:](#) This podcast episode explores the “Three Good Things” exercise, a simple yet powerful technique to boost mental well-being. It provides practical insights for program staff on how to implement this exercise with young people. By focusing on positive experiences, you can help foster a more optimistic and resilient mindset. Ideal for those dedicated to enhancing the emotional health of youth in their programs.

[How to Assess Media Use and Set Boundaries:](#) This podcast episode provides practical strategies for evaluating media use and establishing healthy boundaries for young people. It offers insights for program staff on how to guide youth in developing balanced media habits. By implementing these techniques, you can support the well-being and digital literacy of the young people in your programs. Ideal for those committed to fostering a healthy and mindful approach to media consumption.

[Coping Toolboxes:](#) This podcast episode explores the concept of coping toolboxes, providing practical strategies for program staff. It discusses how to create and utilize these toolboxes to help young people manage stress and emotions effectively. By implementing these techniques, you can support the emotional resilience and well-being of the youth in your programs. Ideal for those dedicated to fostering a supportive and nurturing environment.



Stress Response



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[How Our Bodies Respond to Stress and What We Can Do About It](#) with Drs. Ingrid Cruz and Kristina Kochanova: This webinar delves into the physiological responses our bodies have to stress and offers practical strategies for managing it. It provides valuable insights for out-of-school time program staff on how to support both their own well-being and that of the young people they work with. By understanding these stress responses, you can implement effective techniques to foster resilience and create a healthier environment. Ideal for those committed to promoting mental and emotional health in their programs.



Short Videos

[Shake it Out:](#) This video introduces a fun and effective technique for releasing tension and stress through simple physical movements. It guides viewers through a series of exercises designed to help young people shake off stress and boost their energy levels. Ideal for program staff, this resource provides a practical tool to promote

physical and emotional well-being in a playful and engaging way. Perfect for integrating into daily routines to create a more relaxed and focused environment.

[Body Scan:](#) This video guides viewers through a calming body scan exercise, designed to enhance mindfulness and relaxation. It provides step-by-step instructions to help program staff teach young people how to connect with their bodies and reduce stress. Ideal for promoting mental and emotional well-being, this resource is perfect for integrating mindfulness practices into your programs.

[Humming for Regulation:](#) This video introduces a simple yet effective technique of humming to help regulate emotions and reduce stress. It guides viewers through the process, demonstrating how humming can be used to calm the nervous system. Ideal for program staff, this resource provides a practical tool to support the emotional well-being of young people. Perfect for integrating into daily routines to create a more relaxed and focused environment.



Podcasts

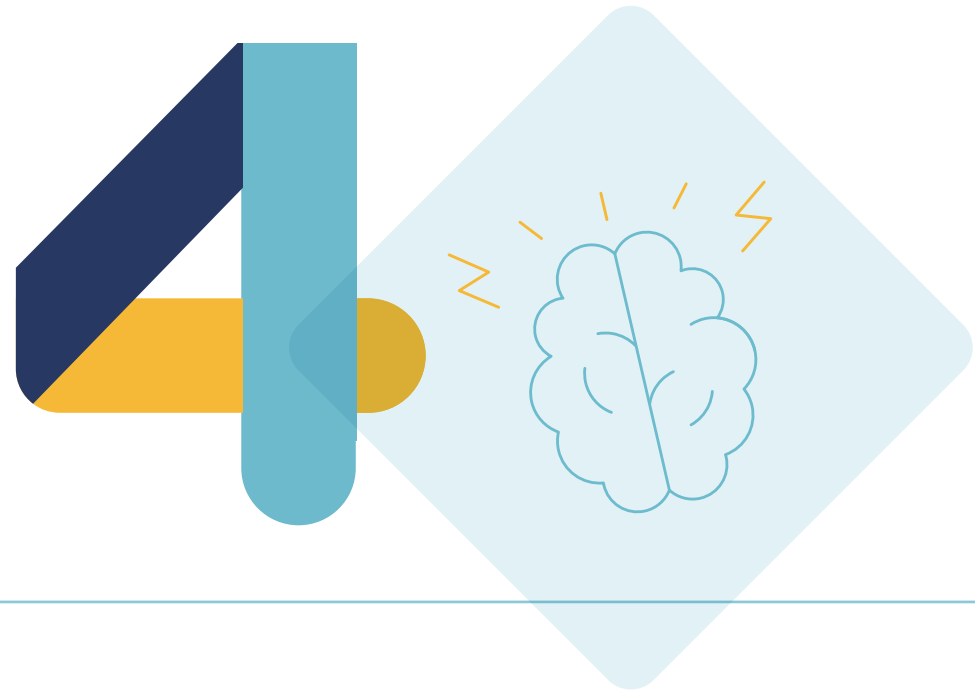
How to Proactively Keep Kids Regulated: This podcast episode offers practical strategies for maintaining emotional regulation in young people. It provides insights for program staff on how to create environments that support consistent emotional balance. By implementing these techniques, you can help foster a calm and focused atmosphere, enhancing the overall well-being of the youth in your programs. Ideal for those dedicated to promoting emotional stability and resilience.

How to Recognize Our Own Signs of Stress – and What to do About It: This podcast episode provides valuable insights into identifying personal signs of stress and offers practical strategies for managing it. It is designed to help program staff understand their own stress responses and implement effective coping mechanisms. By applying these techniques, you can enhance your well-being and better support the young people in your programs. Ideal for those committed to fostering a healthy and balanced work environment.

Crash Course on Emotions: This podcast episode provides a comprehensive overview of emotional intelligence and its importance for young people. It offers practical strategies for program staff to help youth understand and manage their emotions effectively. By implementing these insights, you can foster a supportive environment that promotes emotional growth and resilience. Ideal for those dedicated to enhancing the emotional well-being of the youth in their programs.

Burnout and What to do About It: This podcast episode delves into the causes and symptoms of burnout, offering practical strategies for prevention and recovery. It provides valuable insights for program staff on how to manage their own well-being while supporting the youth they work with. By implementing these techniques, you can foster a healthier, more sustainable work environment. Ideal for those dedicated to maintaining balance and resilience in their professional lives.

Trauma



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[Impacts of Traumatic Stress on Childhood](#) with Dr. West:

This webinar explores the profound effects of traumatic stress on children's development and well-being. It provides valuable insights and practical strategies for out-of-school time program staff to support children who have experienced trauma. By understanding these impacts, you can implement effective interventions to foster resilience and healing. Ideal for those dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing environment for young people.



Short Videos

[Triggers vs. Glimmer](#): This video explains the concepts of triggers and glimmers, highlighting how they impact emotional responses. It provides practical insights for program staff to help young people recognize and manage these emotional cues. By understanding triggers and glimmers, you can better support the emotional regulation and resilience of the youth in your programs. Ideal for fostering a more supportive and empathetic environment.

[Reducing Mental Health Stigma](#): This video addresses the critical issue of mental health stigma and provides actionable strategies to combat it. It offers insights for program staff on how to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for young people. By understanding and addressing stigma, you can help foster a culture of acceptance and empathy. Ideal for those committed to promoting mental health awareness and reducing discrimination.



Podcasts

What are Little t Traumas: This podcast episode explores the concept of “little ‘t’ traumas,” which are smaller, often overlooked experiences that can still significantly impact emotional well-being. It provides insights for program staff on how to recognize and address these subtle yet important traumas in young people. By understanding and validating these experiences, you can better support the emotional health and resilience of the youth in your programs. Ideal for those committed to fostering a nurturing and empathetic environment.

How to Use Familiar Characters and Stories to Help Kids in Programming: This podcast episode explores the power of using familiar characters and stories to engage and support young people in out-of-school time programs. It provides practical strategies for program staff to incorporate these elements into their programming to enhance learning and emotional connection. By leveraging well-known narratives, you can create a more relatable and impactful experience for the youth in your care. Ideal for those dedicated to fostering creativity and engagement in their programs.

How to Create Safe Spaces in Programming: This podcast episode provides essential strategies for creating safe and inclusive environments in out-of-school time programs. It offers practical tips for program staff to ensure that all young people feel valued and protected. By implementing these approaches, you can foster a supportive atmosphere that promotes emotional well-being and trust. Ideal for those dedicated to enhancing the safety and inclusivity of their programs.

Hard Conversations



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[Having Hard Conversations with Youth](#) with Carlyn Andrew:

This webinar provides essential strategies for navigating difficult conversations with empathy and effectiveness. It offers practical tips for out-of-school time program staff to handle sensitive topics with confidence and care. By mastering these techniques, you can foster open communication and build stronger, more supportive relationships with the young people you work with. Ideal for those committed to creating a positive and understanding environment.



Short Videos

[Tough Conversations](#): This video provides practical tips for navigating difficult conversations with young people. It offers strategies for program staff to handle sensitive topics with empathy and confidence. By using these techniques, you can foster open communication and build trust with the youth in your programs. Ideal for those committed to creating a supportive and understanding environment.



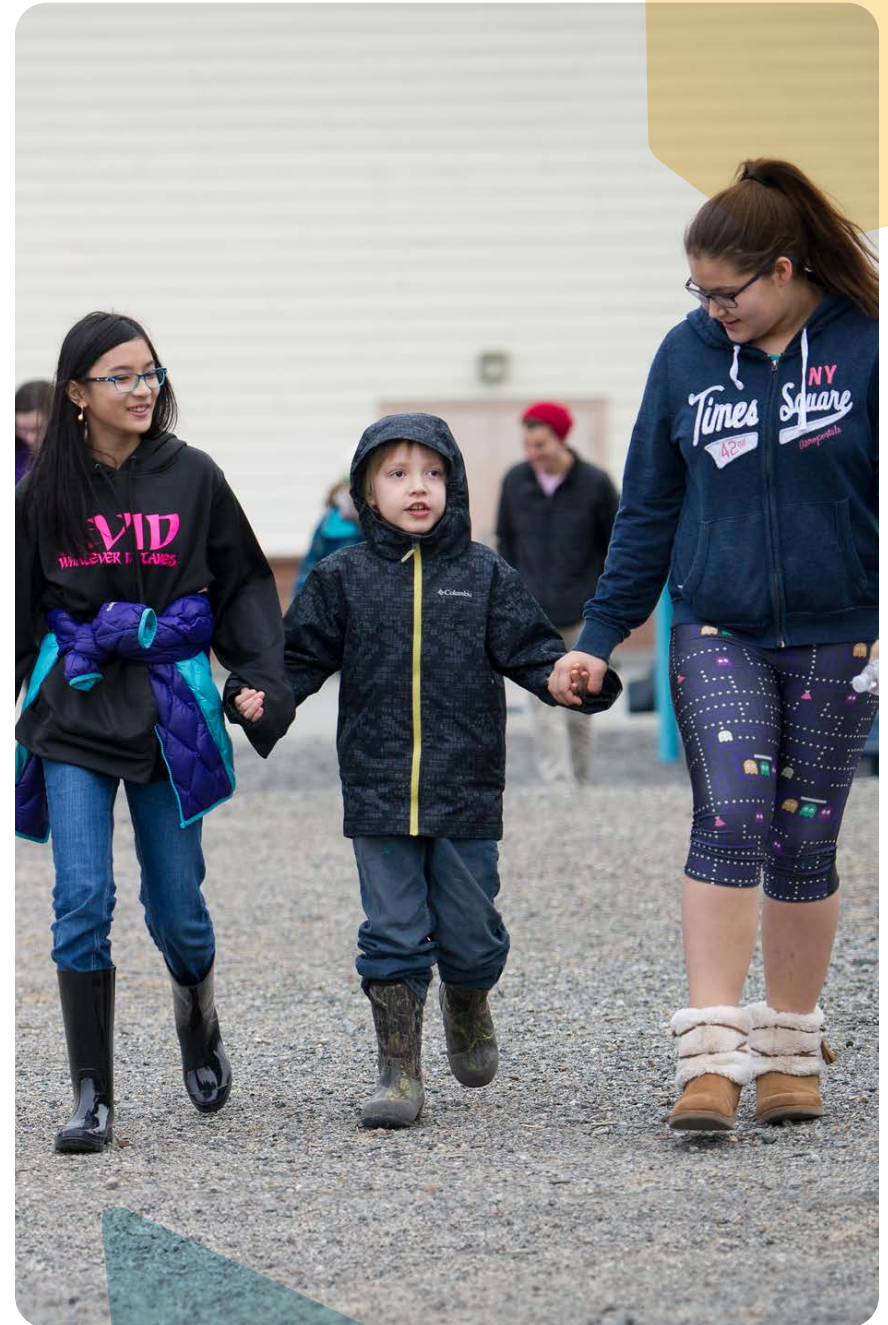
Podcasts

Having Hard Conversations with Youth About Mental Health: This podcast episode provides essential strategies for navigating difficult conversations about mental health with young people. It offers practical tips for program staff to approach these sensitive topics with empathy and confidence. By mastering these techniques, you can foster open communication and build stronger, more supportive relationships with the youth in your programs. Ideal for those committed to promoting mental health awareness and well-being.

Tapping into Youth as Advocates for their Peers: This podcast episode explores the powerful role that young people can play as advocates for their peers. It provides practical strategies for program staff to empower youth to take on leadership roles and support each other. By fostering a culture of peer advocacy, you can enhance the sense of community and resilience within your programs. Ideal for those committed to promoting youth leadership and mutual support.

Demystifying Mental Health Interventions: This podcast episode breaks down various mental health interventions, making them accessible and understandable for program staff. It offers practical tools and strategies that can be implemented to support the mental well-being of young people. By applying these insights, you can enhance your programs and provide more effective support. Ideal for those committed to promoting mental health and resilience in youth.

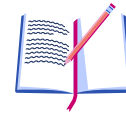
A Conversation on All or Nothing and How to Avoid Extremes When It Comes to Technology: This podcast episode explores the challenges of managing technology use without falling into all-or-nothing thinking. It provides practical strategies for program staff to help young people develop balanced and healthy tech habits. By understanding and avoiding extremes, you can support the well-being and digital literacy of the youth in your programs. Ideal for those committed to fostering a mindful and balanced approach to technology.



Safety for LGBTQ+ Youth



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE ADDING TO OUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT:



Webinar

[Working with Gender Diverse Youth](#) with Dr. Diestlmann: This webinar provides essential insights and strategies for supporting gender diverse youth. It covers best practices for creating inclusive and affirming environments, helping out-of-school time program staff understand and address the unique challenges faced by gender diverse young people. By implementing these approaches, you can foster a more supportive and respectful atmosphere in your programs. Ideal for those committed to promoting equity and inclusion.



Short Videos

[Creating Safe Spaces for LGBTQ+ Youth](#): This video provides essential strategies for creating a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ youth. It offers practical tips for program staff to foster inclusivity and respect. By implementing these approaches, you can help ensure that all young people feel valued and protected. Ideal for those committed to promoting equity and well-being in their programs.



Podcasts

[Why Connections Matter](#): This podcast episode highlights the crucial role of connections in supporting children's mental health. It features insights from experts at the Office of Children's Mental Health, offering practical strategies for program staff to foster meaningful relationships with young people. By understanding the importance of these connections, you can enhance the emotional well-being and resilience of the youth in your programs. Ideal for those dedicated to creating a supportive and nurturing environment.



Thank You to Our Contributors

Wisconsin Department of Administration

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

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Dr. Kelsie Offenwanger

Dr. Jacob Diestelmann

Dr. Jennifer Michels

Dr. Ingrid Cruz

Dr. Kristina Kochanova

Dr. Myra West

Olivia Hamm, LMFT

Quinn Wilder, MSW

Quality Youth
Development Consulting

Jennifer Smith, M.Ed.

Marshfield Clinic Health System

Rachel Charron, MSW

Marshfield Clinic Health System

Linda Hall, Director

Wisconsin Office of Children's
Mental Health

Tiffany Kula, LMFT

Absolute Impact

Madeline Van De Hey, SEL Coordinator

Portage County Boys and Girls Club

Karli Doughty, SEL Specialist

Portage County Boys and Girls Club

Carlyn Andrew, Chief Culture Officer

Boys and Girls Club of the
Fox Valley

Dr. Lindsay Bernhagen

University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point

In partnership with:



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



**Marshfield Clinic
Health System**

