

TRANSCRIPTION

Crystal M.: On March 19th 2020, COVID-19 forced schools to abruptly close and shift to online and hybrid learning, uprooting the lives of caregivers, students, and all school personnel. This podcast series will center the voices of caregivers, students, and school staff members as they discuss their online and hybrid learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this podcast series, multiple stakeholders will gain first-hand insight into the various ways caregivers, students, and school staff members navigated and continue to navigate schooling during a pandemic.

Crystal M.: The goals of this podcast series are to provide stakeholders first-hand accounts of caregivers, students, and school staff members experiences during online and hybrid learning, and provide opportunities for stakeholders to better understand caregivers, students, and school staff members' challenges and triumphs so they can support caregivers, students, and school staff members during the continuing pandemic and beyond.

Crystal M.: We would like to thank the students, caregivers, and school staff members for taking the time to share their experiences with us. We appreciate you all.

[Transition Music]

Counselor: One of the issues that I face is that some parents, they are unable to afford the internet. And so, with the school, we have now run out of hotspots for students. Well, that means that the students is [sic] now not receiving any type of education because they are virtual students. And because the parent has chose [sic] virtual, we can say we forcing [sic] that parent to

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become in-person due to COVID and the pandemic. So now the child is not being educated, since January.

Crystal M.: And there was no solutions in sight of...?

Counselor: The only solution that right now, one of the suggestions I was told to make is to ask if they can make an arrangement with the provider. Now that will be up to the provider. But again, this parent is stating that she does not have an income that would allow her to even afford a payment plan. She is struggling with paying her rent. So, to keep a roof over her head, and her concern is keeping her child healthy at home and then she can't afford the hotspot and the Wi-Fi to help with the education.

Crystal M.: I mean that's a-

Counselor: So, with the solutions, those are some of the issues that we are fighting against right now.

Crystal M.: Yeah. Not been able to give the students access they need to Wi-Fi.

Counselor: To Wi-Fi. We were able to give a lot of students hotspots, but once we ran out, then there's not a solution to it. I sometimes-

Support Staff: I have a question: who determines when it runs out, if there are students who are still in need?

Counselor: Well, we had so many hotspots given out. And even with the hotspot, what we did was coordinate with the elementary, middle school and high school.

So if, say for one hotspot, you can have up to 10 devices. So only one

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household should have received a hotspot. So that way we were able to distribute 100s of hotspots.

Counselor: But those were given to us by T-Mobile. I don't know how the district paid for it, or what arrangements were made. I just know that we were able to have these things. But once we no longer had anymore, we would told to just ask parents to see if they could have their provider, maybe get a hotspot, or make a payment arrangement or things like that.

Support Staff: Wow.

Crystal M.: Yeah. That's-

Support Staff: Wow.

Counselor: So, like I said, that was some of my issues that I'm working through with parents and working through with students.

Crystal M.: Yeah, that... Yeah, because I mean, nothing you say or can do is going to put more money in that mom's hand who needs to keep a roof over their head. And when you think about the cost of Wi-Fi, it's like you know... within a school there just needs to be enough resources coming from somewhere, where that student could have access to what they need to learn at home. Like you said, you can't force them to come back. And it's...to then put it completely on the parent, nothing's going to change your financial situation. And the providers may or may not know they still in the business of making money. They may or may not want to provide... I know there are support programs for Wi-Fi, but for many of them, you have to have your account settled.

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Counselor: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Crystal M.: I mean, they're not going to provide the discounted Wi-Fi if you have a delinquent balance.

Counselor: Right. And you know, I think some people misjudge parents and say, "Well, they should have just sent their child to school." This mom was crying, she was, I mean, she was really weeping about what solutions could she have for her child. And she's like, "I can barely afford my rent. We are barely making it." And so, she needed assistance with other things, with just food and things like that. And so to think, yet this is something else that's added onto her. She can't afford Wi-Fi for her child to be educated.

Support Staff: And then to worry about now sending her to school with COVID. Are they safe in school? You know, like that's...Wow.

Crystal M.: Well, I hope that they get some support, but it's been since January. So, she's going her third month of not getting educated.

Counselor: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Crystal M.: Yeah.

Counselor: Yup.

Counselor: Oh yeah.



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[End of Audio]

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