



# TOPICS IN THE NEWS:

## School-based Mental Health Services

(MARCH 2021)

---

### INTRODUCTION

Research shows a direct link between good mental health and student success in school as well as life. Students who receive social–emotional and mental health are more successful academically, and enjoy a better overall school experience, with fewer behavioral issues and a stronger sense of connectedness. Research also reveals that there is a growing and unmet need for mental health services for youth. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was [reported that nearly 20% of students experience a mental health problem](#) during their school years, counting events such as stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, learning disabilities, and alcohol and substance abuse. Even more troubling, serious mental health problems, such as self-injurious behaviors and suicide, are on the rise. Factor in the impact of the upheaval caused by the pandemic, and [it is safe to assume that the percentage has increased.](#)

To counter this gap there is a push to expand the mental health services provided within the school setting, capitalizing on the logical fit between the two:

- Schools are found in practically every community.
- Most children spend at least 6 hours a weekday at school.
- Schools already have mechanisms in place for regular communication with families.
- School psychologists, counselors, social workers, and nurses are already familiar with students, parents, and other staff, contributing to the comfort with seeking services.
- In some cases, such as rural areas, schools provide the only mental health services in the community.
- Studies show that students are 6% more likely to receive treatment through their schools than through community settings.

The goal of interweaving schools and mental health services is to equitably provide a positive school climate to students and staff by promoting social and emotional learning, mental health and well-being, while reducing the prevalence and severity of mental illness. This *Timely Topics* assembles a variety of resources that expand on the issue.

**If you need assistance accessing any of these resources or need more information, please contact the Library of Michigan at [librarian@michigan.gov](mailto:librarian@michigan.gov) or by phone at 517-335-1477.**

### RELATED CONCEPTS

- [Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#): “...an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop

healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

[\(Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning\)](#)

- [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#): “A comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child. MTSS intentionally interconnects the education, health, and human service systems in support of successful learners, schools, centers, and community outcomes. The five essential components of MTSS are inter-related and complementary. The MTSS framework provides schools and districts with an efficient way to organize resources to support educators in the implementation of effective practices with fidelity so that all learners succeed. (Michigan Department of Education)
- [Mental Health Literacy](#): “The knowledge and beliefs about obtaining and maintaining positive mental health, reducing stigma related to mental illness, increasing help-seeking efficacy, and understanding mental health concerns and how to address them (Jorm, 2012; Kutcher et al., 2016).”
- [Interconnected Systems Framework \(ISF\)](#): a way to blend Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with mental health supports in schools. This framework guides state, district, and community leaders to fund and modify policies and procedures to help every system work more efficiently. Clinicians – supported by integrated district structures – become part of multi-tiered school teams to address the social-emotional and behavior needs of all students. ISF expands the PBIS framework as a way to assist teams and enhance their efforts.
- [Trauma-informed Care](#): An approach that focuses on a patient’s past as well as present, shifting the question from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” It strives to:
  - Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand paths for recovery;
  - Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in patients, families, and staff;
  - Integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
  - Actively avoid re-traumatization.

## LEGISLATIVE TRENDS

Across the country, state leaders have moved these efforts forward by creating policies that require schools to develop mental health strategies and by appropriating funds to support such programs and the staffing required to implement them. Among the related legislation passed in 2020:

- [Michigan SB321 \(2021\)](#) – proposing state government and mental health organizations collaborate on developing or adopting state standards for teachers on recognizing and addressing mental health needs in schools.
- [Michigan HB 4156 \(2021\)](#)  
Establishes minimum number of school counselors to be employed by a school district.
- [Michigan PA 3, 2021](#) – Sec. 31n(6)  
Increases allocation of funding for ISD Mental Health and Support Services
- [Maryland HB 277 \(2020\)](#)  
Requires the State Department of Education to develop guidelines on trauma-informed approaches.
- [Virginia SB 619 \(2020\)](#)  
Requires school employees complete mental health awareness training.
- [North Carolina SB 476 \(2020\)](#)  
Requires the State Board of Education adopt and implement a school-based mental health program.

- [Minnesota SF 1 \(2020\)](#)  
Extends the use of telemedicine alternatives for school-linked mental health services.
- [Colorado HB 1411 \(2020\)](#)  
Allocates CARES Act relief funding to support behavioral health services.
- [North Carolina HB 1105 \(2020\)](#)  
Allocates \$300,000 to the department of social services to establish a student health collaborative pilot program.

## LEARN MORE

From the Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

- [MDE Mental Health webpage](#)
- [MDE Social and Emotional Learning webpage](#)
- [MDE Multi-Tiered System of Supports webpage](#)
- [MDE Return to School Mental Health Tool Kit](#)  
[Compiled by MDE in collaboration with the School Based Mental Health Professionals Coalition, offering school community members and stakeholders effective tools and resources needed to help plan for the road back to the classroom.]
- [MDHHS Trauma and Toxic Stress webpage](#) (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services)

In the Media:

- [Skubick: State government combatting mental health crisis among school children](#), WLNS-TV, 3/25/2021.
- [“Officials Tell Senate Panel to Focus on School Mental Health Needs”](#), (Gongwer, 02-16-21).
- [“Emotional Trauma Related to Pandemic Leads Whitmer to Push for More Mental-health Funding”](#), *Ann Arbor Daily News*, 2/11/2021.
- [MDE Establishes Network to Address Children’s Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health Needs](#) (Michigan Department of Education Press Release, 12-03-2020)

Reports & Research:

- [The Importance of School Mental Health Services](#)  
Handout from the National Association of School Psychologists, summarizing the key points of school mental health services.
- [Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance from the Field](#)  
Report from the National Center for School Mental Health, September 2019
- ["Helping Students Access Mental Health Services "](#), NCSL Webinar, 10/23/2020)  
With panelists Dr. Sharon Hoover, Co-Director, National Center for School Mental Health and Director, National Center for Safe Supportive Schools and Representative Steven Eliason, Utah
- NCSL Policy Brief: [Enhancing School Capacity to Support Children’s Mental Health](#) (01/19/2021).
- [State Policies that Support Healthy Schools: School Year 2019-2020](#)  
Report compiled by Child Trends, in conjunction with the Institute for Health Research and Policy of the University of Illinois Chicago, EMT Associates, Inc., and the National Association of State Boards of Education
- [Supporting Student Mental Health: Resources to Prepare Educators](#) (Mental Health Technology Transfer Center)  
Describes the role of educators in supporting student mental health and explains the core components of mental health literacy.