

School Mental Health

REPORT CARD

2025

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Emphasize Early Intervention

Early intervention is key to helping youth before their problems become more serious. Research shows that the earlier a person gets effective support, the better the outcomes. One of the best ways to spot problems early is to provide school mental health screenings. Just as early identification of vision challenges can lead to the simple but life-changing intervention of glasses, the early identification of mental health struggles can lead to life-changing or even life-saving support for a young person with challenges.

Other policies also play critical roles in early intervention, including requiring an MTSS framework for school mental health services; promoting family and caregiver engagement; and providing safe ways for students to report concerns and get support from mental health professionals.

Policy Recommendations

- **Require every school district to adopt an MTSS or Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports framework for delivering school mental health services to students**
- **Facilitate safe means for reporting mental health concerns, such as through a digital platform**
- **Provide annual mental health screenings**
- **Engage families and caregivers in supporting youth mental health**

State Examples

Emphasize Early Intervention

MTSS Framework



CALIFORNIA AB 2711 (2024) ensures that students who voluntarily disclose substance use to seek help are protected from suspension or expulsion, promoting a supportive approach over punitive measures. This bill aligns with MTSS to create safer school environments and encourage early intervention for students' mental health and substance use concerns.



MICHIGAN SB 0568 (2024) promotes the MTSS framework across schools to provide structured support for students' academic and mental health needs. The legislation also emphasizes professional development for school staff to effectively deliver these tiered services.



VIRGINIA HB 6001 (2023) ensures that all school districts implement the MTSS framework for mental health services. Additionally, the Virginia Tiered System of Supports includes family engagement and universal mental health screenings as part of its approach to school-based mental health.

Safe Reporting



DELAWARE developed an app, Safe DE, for students, families, and school staff that includes a crisis text line and mental health education and resources. The app enables students to confidentially voice a concern or ask for help for themselves or others.



WASHINGTON HB 1580 (2023) establishes a children's crisis response system with a digital component to report concerns, improve access to mental health support, and facilitate rapid response to students in crisis.

State Examples

Emphasize Early Intervention

Mental Health Screenings



COLORADO [HB 23-1003](#) (2023) creates a mental health screening program available to public schools serving grades 6–12. The legislation requires use of an evidence-based screening tool and specifies responses related to screening results.



LOUISIANA [HB 353](#) (2023) requires the Department of Education to develop a pilot program in three school systems to implement trauma-informed mental health screenings and provide related mental health services.

Family and Caregiver Engagement



MINNESOTA Providers may use funding from [school-linked mental health grants](#) to support families in meeting their child's needs, including navigating health care, social service, and juvenile justice systems.

Additional Resources

States can also leverage existing resources to support families and caregivers as they look to improve their child's wellbeing. For example, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing provides [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) courses for adults, and NAMI offers a [free education program](#), available in-person and online, for parents and caregivers of youth experiencing mental health conditions.

State Spotlight on Supporting School Safety and Crisis Response in Utah

SafeUT is an app designed to help keep schools and students safe. It allows students, families, caregivers, and educators to submit confidential tips on concerns like bullying, school safety threats, and violence. Tips are triaged by trained professionals who alert school administrators and others, as necessary. It also has chat and phone call features that allow users to speak with a master's level counselor or connect with the Utah Crisis Line (with the same staff as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) for a wide range of concerns, such as self-harm, life challenges, and drug and alcohol problems. All services are provided at no cost, 24/7, every week of the year.

Established in 2015 through **UTAH SB 175**, SafeUT is nationally recognized for its effectiveness in saving lives and de-escalating potential school threats by having mental health professionals, rather than law enforcement, respond first.

SafeUT's Impact in 2023

885,519+
students
with access to the app

30,503 total chats
started with SafeUT
counselors

9,204 total tips
submitted from K-12
and higher education,
including parents/
guardians and educators

Improve Connections to Mental Health Services

While school-based professionals are critical to support students with low to moderate mental health concerns, it is also important for districts to coordinate linkages with the community when a student needs more intensive and specialized services. For example, a student might be dealing with an eating disorder, but there might not be a trained specialist in the district. However, through a connection made by a district mental health coordinator, the student can be connected to an expert provider in the community or via telehealth.

Additionally, states may find it helpful to create dedicated positions within the state to facilitate coordination between the state education agency, Medicaid agency, and other child-serving agencies to support the implementation of effective school mental health programs. Dedicated state-level staff can also help provide guidance to districts on ways to enhance school-linked services and improve connections to community-based care.

Policy Recommendations

- **Implement school-linked telemental health programs to supplement school-based services or provide access in under-staffed schools**
- **Facilitate school-linked mental health programs that provide access to community mental health professionals on school grounds**
- **Require school-based health centers to provide onsite mental health expertise or access to mental health services via telemental health**
- **Fund school or school district coordinators to facilitate school, community, and family connections**
- **Fund state-level positions to coordinate across agencies and support local education agencies in implementing school mental health programs**

State Examples

Improve Connections to Mental Health Services

School-Linked Telemental Health Programs



COLORADO SB 24-001 (2024) makes permanent the “I Matter” program, which offers free telemental health services to Colorado youth.



TEXAS SB 11 (2019) establishes telemental health services for at-risk children and youth through the Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) program. The program supports local school districts in identifying and assessing mental health needs and providing access to services.



WASHINGTON SB 5187 (2023) funded a pilot program for rural school districts to provide students with access to mental health professionals using telemedicine. Aimed at addressing geographic barriers and workforce shortages, this program also allowed funding to be used for copays or fees for telemedicine visits if not covered by a student’s public or private insurance.

School-Linked Community Mental Health Services



FLORIDA HB 5101 (2024) requires school districts to create mental health programs with direct hires and partnerships with local mental health providers, focusing on early identification and support for students in need.



VIRGINIA SB 1043 (2023) directs the Department of Education to create a model memorandum of understanding between school boards and community mental health services providers that sets parameters for the provision of mental health services for students.

State Examples

Improve Connections to Mental Health Services

School-Based Health Centers



CALIFORNIA offers a grant program to help school-based health centers provide mental health services.



MARYLAND allows for Medicaid reimbursement of mental health services provided through school-based health centers.

School-Based Mental Health Coordinators



ALABAMA [HB 123](#) (2022) mandates each school district and independent school system to employ a mental health service coordinator.



FLORIDA [HB 899](#) (2022) requires each district school board to identify a mental health coordinator responsible for overseeing the coordination, communication, and implementation of student mental health policies and procedures.



MARYLAND [SB 1265](#) (2018) requires each school district to appoint a mental health service coordinator to collaborate with local providers, social services, and other entities that provide mental health services.



NORTH DAKOTA [SB 2149](#) (2019) directs each school district to designate a behavioral health resource coordinator. The state also established the [Behavioral Health in Education: Resources and Opportunities \(B-HERO\) Technical Assistance Center](#) in 2021 to help school resource coordinators better support students, families, school staff, and communities.

State Examples

Improve Connections to Mental Health Services

State Mental Health Coordinators



ILLINOIS [SB 724](#) (2023) establishes a Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation Officer to lead interagency efforts to support youth with complex mental health needs.



MISSOURI [HB 2002](#) (2024) provides funding for a state-level school-based mental health coordinator.