



Expanded School Mental Health in West Virginia

www.schoolmentalhealthwv.org

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Infrastructure

Tool Kit #1

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SCHOOL-WIDE FOUNDATION OF LEARNING SUPPORTS:

“An infrastructure of policies, staff and management that articulates, supports and sustains a comprehensive school mental health model.”

West Virginia Expanded School Mental Health Steering Team, 2011

Some students face barriers to learning that cannot be overcome by instructional improvements alone. West Virginia school systems are beginning to expand the availability of student supports by teaming up with other community agencies in Expanded School Mental Health initiatives. By building an infrastructure to meet the social and emotional needs of students, schools can take steps toward improved student attendance, well-being and academic achievement.

An Expanded School Mental Health framework includes school-wide prevention, targeted screening and early intervention, as well as intensive treatment for students with the most serious challenges. Just as important as the components of a comprehensive effort are the structures, processes and principles that will support and sustain the activities and programs at all three levels.

An evaluation of the Healthy School Communities identified nine “levers that catalyzed significant change “in school culture. Of these, the role of the principal was the most critical piece in implementing meaningful school improvement.¹ The district leadership, school principal and school leadership team must support the following principles and structures for successful improvement:

Principles That Support Expanded School Mental Health

- A philosophy /belief in the whole child: that physical and mental health is crucial to school success
- Meaningful involvement at all levels of community agencies, parents, and students
- Use of empirically based practices and tools
- A continuous quality improvement process that establishes standards; and monitors and evaluates selected interventions, the school climate, and parent and student satisfaction
- Planning that is data driven, strategic, assesses needs and strengths, has specific goals and objectives and is aligned with other school reform and community initiatives.

Structures and Processes That Support Expanded School Mental Health

- A five year strategic plan that addresses social and emotional health
- A district-level learning supports steering committee

DEFINITION: “Expanded school mental health” refers to programs that build on core services typically provided by schools. It is a framework that:

- ◆ includes the full continuum of prevention, early intervention and treatment
- ◆ serves all students
- ◆ emphasizes shared responsibility between schools, mental health providers and other community partners

- A school-level learning supports team or improvement team
- A school-level student assistance team that includes community agency staff
- Team leaders responsible for facilitating and coordinating the work of all groups across district and school levels
- A referral and follow up process that ensures accountability such as a person assigned to each referred student to function as case manager to coordinate internal and external services
- Commitment of time, training and resources for planning and coordination within and among teams

Existing structures such as the mandated Local School Improvement Council, the Student Assistance Team and the professional learning community may be used IF they are given the time, adequate resources and leadership. Coordination of teams through designated leaders and members common to both teams is helpful.

REFERENCE

¹Healthy School Communities, The ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2010
http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/products/healthyschools/ltl_may2010.pdf

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West Virginia Resources

- **Policy 2510, Sec. 8.9: Addresses role and composition of Student Assistance Teams (SATs)** <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2510.pdf>, page 41

- **Policy 2419, Sec. B: Clarifies roles, procedures and timeframes for Student Assistance Teams (SATs)** <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/>



General Resources

- **Tool for Schools to Assess Mental Health Infrastructure: Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Template (MHPET)**, National Assembly on School Based Health Care <http://www.nasbhc.org/site/c.ckLQKbOVLkK6E/b.7635259/k.BCA1/MHPET.htm>
- **Role of the School Principal: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff**, Center for Mental Health in Schools, UCLA <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7stepover.pdf>

The purpose of this series of information briefs is to provide a common framework and recommendations to assist schools and community mental health providers to more effectively develop a comprehensive approach to school mental health that is consistent with current West Virginia Department of Education policies.




These recommendations and resources have been reviewed and approved by West Virginia's Expanded School Mental Health Steering Team. For more information contact info@schoolmentalhealthwv.org

For more information visit
www.schoolmentalhealthwv.org

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