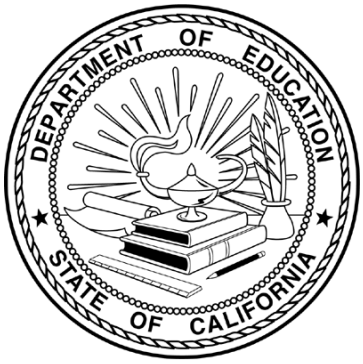
A Guide to Increase Mental Health Services for Students



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Introduction

This guide is created by Project Cal-Well, with input from the Student Mental Health Policy Workgroup, to assist schools and districts to build capacity to better address mental health challenges among students. Project Cal-Well is funded by the “Now Is the Time” Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Project Cal-Well is a consortium between the California Department of Education (CDE), ABC Unified School District (USD), Garden Grove USD, and San Diego County Office of Education. The University of California, San Francisco conducts the evaluation of Project Cal-Well’s impact on student mental health in California. You can find information about Project Cal-Well on the CDE Project Cal-Well web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is there a need to provide mental health services at schools?

- One in five school-aged youth in the United States experiences mental health issues that interfere with learning, and suicide is now the second leading cause of death for young people ages ten to twenty-four (see citations 1, 2, and 3 on page 10). Ninety percent of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness (see citation 11 on page 10).

- More than half of young people with mental health needs remain untreated or undertreated (see citation 4 on page 10). When not adequately addressed, mental illness is linked to reduced academic achievement, increased school suspensions, chronic school absences, and credit deficiency (see citations 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 on page 10).

- Early intervention using evidence-based counseling supports can limit the progression of emotional distress and/or mental illness and improve students' social, behavioral, and academic functioning at school (see citation 10 on page 10).

- Many students who may not have mental health challenges of their own, have other key people in their lives who do. These students need adults in the schools who have appropriate knowledge and professional skills to notice and support the students who are experiencing stress and to respond to their questions and need for resources.

- Schools are typically the primary place where students interact. Families are much more likely to utilize mental/physical health services if those services are located on the school campus.

2. What personnel groups can provide mental health services to students?

- Listed below are the credentials and licenses that authorize staff to provide mental health and mental health related supports:

    - The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) grants the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credential. The PPS Credential authorizes the following four specializations: school counseling, school social work, school psychology, and school child welfare and attendance services. The CTC also grants the California School Nurse Services Credential. A brief description for each specialization is provided in the following table:

Area of Specialization	Description of Duties
School Counseling	The specialization in School Counseling authorizes the holder to perform the following duties: Develop, plan, implement, and evaluate a school counseling and guidance program that includes academic, career, personal, and social development; advocate for the high academic achievement and social development of all students; provide schoolwide prevention and intervention strategies and counseling services; provide consultation, training, and staff development to teachers and parents regarding students' needs; supervise a district-approved advisory program as described in California *Education Code (EC)* Section 49600
School Social Work	The specialization in School Social Work authorizes the holder to perform the following duties: Assess home, school, personal, and community factors that may affect a student's learning; identify and provide intervention strategies for children and their families, including counseling, case management, and crisis intervention; consult with teachers, administrators, and other school staff regarding social and emotional needs of students; coordinate family, school, and community resources on behalf of students
School Psychology	The specialization in School Psychology authorizes the holder to perform the following duties: Provide services that enhance academic performance; design strategies and programs to address problems of adjustment; consult with other educators and parents on issues of social development and behavioral and academic difficulties; conduct psycho-educational assessment for purposes of identifying special needs; provide psychological counseling for individuals, groups, and families; coordinate intervention strategies for management of individuals and schoolwide crises
Child Welfare and Attendance	The specialization in Child Welfare and Attendance authorizes the holder to perform the following duties: Access appropriate services from both public and private providers, including law enforcement and social services; provide staff development to school personnel regarding state and federal laws pertaining to due process and child welfare and attendance laws; address school policies and procedures that inhibit academic success; implement strategies to improve student attendance; participate in schoolwide reform efforts; promote understanding and appreciation of those factors that affect the attendance of culturally-diverse student populations

Area of Specialization	Description of Duties
School Nurse	Holders of the School Nurse Services Credential shall be authorized to perform the following services: Conduct immunization programs pursuant to *EC* Section 49403, of the *California Code of Regulations*; assess and evaluate the health and developmental status of pupils; interpret the health and developmental assessment to parents, teachers, administrators, and other professionals directly concerned with the pupil; design and implement individual student health maintenance plans, incorporating plans directed by a physician; refer the pupil and parent or guardian to appropriate community resources for necessary services; maintain communication with parents and all involved community practitioners and agencies to promote needed treatment and secure reports of findings pertinent to educational planning; interpret medical and nursing findings appropriate to the student's individualized education program and make recommendations to professional personnel directly involved; consult with, conduct in-service training for, and serve as a resource person to teachers and administrators; develop and implement the health education curriculum; act as a participant in implementing a comprehensive health instruction curriculum for students; counsel and assist pupils and parents in health-related and school adjustment services; teach health-related subjects under the supervision of a classroom teacher

For further information regarding these areas of specialization, please refer to the Pupil Personnel Services Credential for Individuals Prepared in California leaflet at https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/leaflets/cl606c.pdf?sfvrsn=48a2868d_0 and the School Nurse Services Credential leaflet at https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/leaflets/cl380.pdf?sfvrsn=4f3624f8_0.

- The California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) grants the licensure for Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Clinical Counseling, Clinical Social Work, and Licensed Educational Psychologist. For a detailed description of these licenses, please see the BBS Statutes and Regulations Booklet at http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/publications/lawsregs.pdf

- The California Board of Psychology (BOP) grants a Psychologist license. For more information about this license, please see the California BOP Laws and Regulations at http://www.psychology.ca.gov/laws_regs/2018lawsregs.pdf

- While the licensed mental health services providers may have the training to provide mental health services, if they do not have a PPS Credential, they

must be supervised in their school-based activities by an individual holding a PPS Credential (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 5 [5 *CCR*], Section 80049.1, subdivision [c]).

3. What is the best model of school-based mental health services?

- There are many options for improving students' access to mental health services in the school setting. Districts and schools may employ full or part-time mental health staff credentialed in the specializations above, or they may elect to contract for services through community-based mental health organizations, county mental health agencies, and/or individual mental health services providers, and be supervised by an individual with a PPS Credential. Schools and districts must make their decisions based on the needs and resources available. Things to consider include funding streams, hiring policies, and partner agency policies and availability.

- Regardless of whether the school is using district or contracted staff, a good model to deliver school-based mental health services is through a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Please refer to Section 8 for more information on how to integrate mental health services within a MTSS framework.

4. Do I need to provide clinical supervision for mental health services providers?

- Supervision is always required for pre-licensed individuals including university trainees, interns, and post-graduate associates. A plan for providing supervision to pre-licensed individuals is necessary.

- Supervisor qualifications and supervision requirements vary across personnel groups and are defined by university training programs and state laws and regulations.

- Ensure that supervision matches trainee needs by consulting with personnel at the trainee's university training programs.

- Contracted licensed mental health services providers have to be supervised by an individual with a PPS Credential while performing school-based mental health services. Non-PPS Credentialed mental health personnel do not necessarily understand the public school system and the legal requirements governing student confidentiality. Good communication between the contracted agency and district would reduce misunderstandings between the parties involved. It is important that the district includes this information in the agency contract: communication practices, personnel clearances, identification badges, emergency procedures, provider liability insurance coverage, counseling expectations, and district and agency information sharing under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Health

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (e.g., Releases of Information, email communications, and authority to access district student data systems etc.).

5. What additional resources are required to support mental health services providers?

- Most mental health personnel will need access to a safe and confidential space for meeting with students and their families and a locked file cabinet for any identifying records.
- In addition to adequate space and physical resources, mental health personnel will be able to better serve the school community if there is an effective system for managing referrals.
- Consult with your mental health personnel to better understand their personal preferences and needs.
- Depending on the situation and the age of the student, parental consent is either required or could be needed for services to be provided. Refer to California *Health and Safety Code*, Section 124260 and California Family Code, Section 6924 for more information.
- It takes a continuum of care and services to address student mental health. Mental health providers are best supported by an environment in which all school staff are trained in trauma-informed practices and/or Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), and play a role in creating a supportive school climate for all students.

For more information on trauma informed practices, please see the Trauma Informed Care Toolkits at https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/trauma-informed-care-toolkits-1

To request a free YMHFA training from the CDE, please visit the CDE Project Cal-Well web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp.

6. Is there funding available for mental health services at school?

- Districts and schools have many options for funding school mental health supports. Examples of funding sources include, but are not limited to:
    - General education funding through the Local Control Funding Formula and student mental health services support State Priorities 5 (Pupil Engagement) and 6 (School Climate) in the Local Control and Accountability Plan.

- Categorical funding through the Every Student Succeeds Act Title II-A and IV-A funds.
- Federal grants such as Safe Schools/Healthy Students.
- Funds to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Students with disabilities who have been assessed and deemed eligible for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) have access to mental health related services as determined to be necessary by their IEP teams.
- National, state, and local private foundations.
- Leveraged resources with local partners such as county offices of education and county behavioral health, including involvement in the county mental health plans.
- Medi-Cal may reimburse for services provided to qualifying students. Please refer to the Local Educational Agency (LEA) Provider Manual for more information (see link below).

You can find information about funding school-based mental health services on the California School Based Health Alliance Funding School-Based Mental Health web page at https://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/start-up-and-operations/funding/mental-health/.

You can find information about Medi-Cal billing on the California Department of Health Care Services Medi-Cal/LEA Program Provider Manual web page at http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/LEAProviderManual.aspx.

7. How can the effectiveness of mental health services at my school be assessed?

- Studies show that school-based mental health services are associated with a wide variety of positive student outcomes, such as, but not limited to: improved attendance, improved academic achievement, increased graduation rates, reduced discipline referrals, decreased chronic absenteeism, and a decrease in student risk-taking behaviors. Positive staff outcomes such as increased teacher retention rates were also reported.
- When collecting data regarding student mental health services, it is important to consider how data are collected, analyzed, and shared. One way to protect student confidentiality, while also measuring the efficacy of services, is to share anonymous data in aggregate form. It may be helpful to consult mental health services providers to identify all relevant confidentiality guidelines.

- You will want to collect both process and outcome data to ensure that you can communicate evidence of success. Specific process and outcome metrics will vary based on your site's needs and preferences.

- Process metrics are those that characterize the magnitude of the services provided (e.g., number of sessions provided, total number of students served).

- Outcome metrics are those that characterize the degree of change over the course of the counseling intervention. Individual outcome metrics are often collected using data from a valid and reliable pre-post measure relating to social-emotional well-being.

- To examine change over time for the entire school population, you may also use measures like the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) to measure effectiveness over a longer period of time to track students' emotional well-being and overall school climate. The CHKS has supplemental modules on assessing students' social-emotional health (Social Emotional Health Module) and mental health (Cal-Well Module) that can be added to the CHKS Core Module.

You can find more information on the CHKS survey questions on student social emotional and mental health on the CHKS Survey Content & Download web page at http://chks.wested.org/administer/download/.

8. How do I integrate mental health services within a Multi-tiered System of Supports framework?

- School mental health services are best provided within a MTSS framework. A good example of how school mental health services can be integrated into a MTSS framework is through the Interconnected Systems Framework (see citation 12 on page 11).

- Project Cal-Well has the following model to increase student mental health services:

    - **Component 1: School Climate**—While most mental health services are provided in Tiers 2 and 3 of the MTSS framework, it is critical that schools offering school-based mental health services address school climate as 'universal interventions' in Tier 1. Schools having a positive school climate would reduce the need for mental health services, and schools offering mental health services are perceived by students to be more supportive. Some examples of strategies used by schools to promote a positive school climate include MTSS, Restorative Practices, Social Emotional Learning, and Trauma-Informed Practices.

Schools can also train their staff in YMHFA so more adults can play a part in supporting the social emotional needs of students at school.

- **Component 2: School Based Services**—For some students needing additional mental health services, schools would need to increase school-based mental health services by utilizing the various mental health professionals as listed in Section 2. Trained para-professionals, being supervised by a credentialed mental health professional, have also been used to deliver early mental health services to younger students under the Primary Intervention Program. Please see 5 *CCR* Section 80049.1(c) below regarding how non-credentialed individuals may be used to support school-based mental health services:

  Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude school districts from utilizing community-based service providers, including volunteers, individuals completing counseling-related internship programs, and state-licensed individuals and agencies to assist in providing pupil personnel services, provided that such individuals and agencies are supervised in their school-based activities by an individual holding a PPS credential.

- **Component 3: Community Collaborations**—For students needing more intensive and targeted interventions, it is important that schools develop and improve collaboration and partnerships with local community mental health agencies to expand access to community-based mental health services for students and families.

You can find more information on establishing effective school mental health pathways, on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration School Mental Health Referral Pathways Toolkit web page at https://knowledge.samhsa.gov/resources/school-mental-health-referral-pathways-toolkit.

9. Where can I find more information about mental health services for students?

- California School Based Health Alliance web page at https://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/
- University of Maryland School of Medicine Center for School Mental Health web page at http://csmh.umaryland.edu/
- University of California, Los Angeles School Mental Health Project web page at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/
- A Guide to Student Mental Health and Wellness in California available for purchase on the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health Books web page at http://www.macmh.org/books/

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