Addressing Children’s Mental and Behavioral Health Needs in the Schools

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Moving Upstream:
A Story of Prevention and Intervention

“It occurred to me that someone ought to go upstream and find out why so many kids were falling into the river. What I found is that the old wooden bridge had several planks missing, and when some children tried to jump over the gap, they could not make it and fell through into the river: So I got someone to fix the bridge.”

Risk factors that create “Barriers to Learning”

- Poverty
- Exposure to violence or drug use
- Absent or infirm parents
- Behavioral and cognitive disabilities
- Court-involved – juvenile justice
- Foster care

Failure to address multiple problems early on can lead to systems spillover.
Schools are victim of systems spillover.
Need for Mental Health Supports in Idaho

• 18,000 children in Idaho live with serious mental health conditions.
• Approximately 1 in 10 children between ages 2 – 17 have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions.
• 2 times as many boys are diagnosed with an emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition.
• Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among youth and young adults aged 15-24.
• Approximately 47 percent of Idaho students aged 14 and older living with serious mental health conditions who receive special education services dropped out of high school.
• Only 50% of children in need of services received mental health treatment in the past year.

Spring 2016, ISCA newsletter, Jennifer Tachell

• Lack of access to community resources, especially in rural areas, there are no  
  – mental health
  – drug/alcohol
  – family counseling services
• An increase in mental health and behavioral issues
  – Counselors report an increase in crisis management situations (such as suicidal students), and this leaves little time for meeting the academic, personal/social, and career needs of ALL students.
OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ESSA

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Offers New Opportunities

- Shift of control from federal to state and local jurisdictions (Risk and Opportunity!)
- Engagement of stakeholders in decision making (SISP) and accountability measures and systems
- More flexible funding streams
- More comprehensive, less prescribed accountability measures
- **Emphasis on mental/behavioral health and school climate/safety**
- Added resources for foster children and youth
- Risk of reduced attention to children with special needs; masking outcomes for these populations

Key ESSA Definition: **School Based Mental Health Services Provider**

- **School-based mental health services provider:** "...includes a State-licensed or State-certified school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or other State licensed or certified mental health professional qualified under State law to provide mental health services to children and adolescents.

Key ESSA Definition: **Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)**

**Specialized Instructional Support Personnel** means "(i)school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists; and "(ii) other qualified professional personnel... involved in providing assessment, diagnosis, counseling, educational, therapeutic, and other necessary services (including related services ...) as part of a comprehensive program to meet student needs.

- Replaces "pupil services personnel"
- Is intended to reflect the similarities between pupil services (as defined in ESEA) and 'related services' as defined by IDEA
- ESSA explicitly references (and in some cases mandates) specialized instructional support personnel and services *more than* in policies regarding state and district school improvement plans; identifying and supporting students most at risk of school failure; improving student literacy; addressing school climate and school safety; supporting the mental and behavioral health of students, among others.
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE SCHOOLS

Need for Mental Health Supports

- Divorce
- Financial difficulties
- Homelessness
- Sickness
- Violence
- Deployment
- Death
- Unemployment
- Bullying
- Academic difficulties

What is Mental Health?

- Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness but also encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral wellness and the ability to cope with life’s challenges.

“Mental health is as important as physical health to a child's quality of life and impacts their learning, development and success in school.”
Why Mental Health in Schools?

- Students are substantially more likely to seek help when school-based mental health services are available.
- Schools are already the major providers of mental health services to children.
- The Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents concluded that, while school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students, schools must meet the challenge when the need directly affects learning.

The Good News!

- School based counseling programs improve student mental wellness, behavioral functioning, and academic achievement.
- School mental health programs improve educational outcomes by decreasing absences, discipline referrals and improving test scores.
- Expanded school mental health services in elementary schools have been found to:
  - reduce special education referrals
  - improve aspects of the school climate
  - produce declines in disciplinary referrals, suspension, grade retention, and special education referrals and placement among at-risk students
What We Know…

• The earlier school staff can identify students’ difficulties, the quicker and less expensive the task is to help them catch up

• The longer a student goes without assistance, the longer the remediation time and the more intense the services must be

What We Know…

• Students must know what is expected of them
• Behavior is learned
• Schools must provide safe, learning conducive and predictable environments
• We must teach students what positive behaviors look like

Integrating Response To Instruction & Intervention (RTII) and PBIS

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

• Mental and behavioral health services fall on a continuum and are increasingly provided within a multi-tiered system of supports
  – Tier I: promotion of mental and behavioral wellness and prevention of mental and behavioral health problems
  – Tier II: direct and indirect services to address emerging mental and behavioral health problems and prevent risky behaviors
  – Tier III: direct and indirect services to address identified mental and behavioral health problems
• services provided by at all three levels are considered mental and behavioral health services
Mental Health in Schools:
Current practice in school-based mental health:
- Over emphasis on individual treatment to the detriment of prevention.
- A focus on mental illness & treatment leads to:
  - Increasing demand on clinical services
  - Assigning diagnostic labels to commonplace behavioral, learning and emotional problems.
  - Consuming finite resources and a zero-sum game

Adelman & Taylor, Fall 2007

Mental Health in Schools:
“Much more than services for a few”
School systems need to address all three tiers:
- Promote healthy development, prevent problems
- Address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- Have a system for assisting those with chronic and severe problems.

Adelman & Taylor, Fall 2007

Advantages of MTSS
- Provides instructional and behavioral assistance in a timely fashion (e.g., not a wait to fail model)
- Helps to ensure a student’s poor academic performance is not due to:
  - poor instruction
  - inappropriate curriculum
  - lack of expectations
- Informs teachers and improves behavior and/or instruction because data are collected and closely linked to interventions.

Discussion 1:
- What is your school/district doing to address the mental and behavioral health needs of students?
  - Do you use “Tiered” supports?
  - Who provides these services?
  - Are they available to all students?
  - Are certain services specifically offered for students with an IEP?
Model of School-Based Mental Health Services

**Tier 1/Universal**
- School-Wide Assessment
- Check-in/Check-out
- Social/Academic Instructional Groups
- ODRs, Attendance, Tardies, Grades, DBELS, etc.
- Daily Progress Report (DPR)
- Behavior Code Academic Grade
- Competing Behavior Pathway, Functional Assessment Interview, Scatter Plots, etc.
- RTI, RD, EI, T, ODRs, Attendance, Tardies, Grades, DBELS, etc.
- Brief Functional Behavioral Assessment/Behavior Intervention Planning (FBA/BIP)
- Complex FBA/BIP
- Wraparound

**Tier 2/Secondary**
- Prevention and Universal Interventions
- Examples
  - Classroom guidance lessons
  - Social Emotional Learning
  - Positive behavior interventions and supports
  - Effective discipline policies and practices
  - Bullying/Violence Prevention
  - Crisis prevention and intervention teams
  - Fostering positive relationships among students and staff
  - Universal screening for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning

**Tier 3/Tertiary**
- School-Based Prevention & Universal Interventions

SIMEO Tools:
- HSC-T, RD-T, EI-T
Discussion 2

• What are the “Universal” interventions/supports that you are using in your school to meet the needs of your students?

Early Identification

• Staff development/Mental Health First Aid
• Suicide Risk/Threat Universal Screening
• Protocols for Responding to Bullying
• Self-Reporting
• Anonymous Reporting

Sample Behavior Screener
University of Nebraska
Targeted Interventions

- Check-In Check Out
- Behavior Plans
- Group Counseling
- Mentoring
- Teacher/Family Consultation
- Facilitate conversation
- Family/school/community

Intensive School Interventions

- Intensive Community Interventions

- Intensive School Interventions
- Long Term Therapy
- Functional Behavioral Assessment
- Family Counseling
- Special Education Consideration
- Involvement with Social Services
- Individualized Behavior Plan
- Community Mentoring
- More restrictive environment

Discussion 4

- How are you using your school-employed mental health professionals to provide “intensive supports”?
- How do you integrate school-based and community-based services?

I Recognize . . .

- Some school psychologists & school counselors are limited in their ability to provide mental and behavioral health services due to other demands of their role in the schools or administrative decisions
- Some may need professional development to strengthen their competencies
- Perceptions related to the provision of these services need to be challenged at both the graduate preparation and practitioner level, as well as at the administrative and policy making level
NASP Resources on ESSA: Handouts for Administrators & Policy Makers

- Engaging SPs for Student Success
- Engaging SPs to Improve Assessment and Accountability Systems
- Engaging SPs to Improve Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- Engaging SPs to Create Safe and Supportive School Climates
- Comprehensive School Mental and Behavioral Health Services

NASP ESSA Implementation Resources:

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Bullying/Bullying_Brief_12.pdf
The School Counselor and Multi-tiered System of Supports

- School counselors align their work with MTSS through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to improve student achievement and behavior.

- [https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_MultitieredSupportSystem.pdf](https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_MultitieredSupportSystem.pdf)

NASP White Paper: School Psychologists Mental and Behavioral Health Role

- School psychologists are qualified MBH providers
- NASP training and practice standards encompass MBH services
- School psychologists are recognized in ACA and ESSA as qualified providers


Online Resources: Mental Health

- [Counseling & Mental Health](https://nasponline.org)
  - Podcasts
    - Through a New Lens: Transforming EBD Identification Through Culturally Responsive Approaches
    - Bridges to Support Behavioral Health Services in Schools, Universities, and Hospitals
    - Continuum of DBT Services for School-Based Settings to Address Emotional Regulation Skills
    - Taking the ‘Pole’ out of Bipolar: Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder
    - Meta-Analysis of Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Youth and Caregivers
    - Tough Kids, Cool Counseling: Top Techniques for Influencing Challenging Students
    - Individual Counseling With LGBTQ Students: Ethical and Affirmative Practices
    - Universal Screening to Inform Interventions for Behavioral and Emotional Concerns
    - Peers Promoting School Success: Protection Against Bullying
    - NASP Dialogues: Group Counseling
  - Online Learning Center
    - Assessing and Remediating Student Test Anxiety
    - Multicultural Counseling: Culturally Responsive Approaches in the Era of Evidence-Based Interventions
    - Individual Counseling With LGBTQ Students: Ethical and Affirmative Practices