

Mental Health Standards and Guidelines

The State Board of Education recognizes that the social and emotional wellbeing of students should be addressed and promoted in order to maximize academic achievement. In accordance with this principle, Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are encouraged to adopt protocols, standards and guidelines that will address the prevention, early identification, referral, and follow up of student mental health needs. Local guidelines may be unique to each LEA so that effective interventions and established community relationships are maximized.

The goal of these guidelines is to improve student achievement by reducing fragmentation of services and aligning and integrating mental health services to children. These guidelines address the infrastructure necessary to coordinate, improve, and evaluate support programs currently offered in school and in the community. It does not require new program development, but calls on schools to consider how best to support resilience in youth, identify students who need in-school mental health support, and provide a family driven and seamless integration within established community systems of care.

1. Local Educational Agencies/schools should align their systems and available resources to enable all pupils to have an equal opportunity for success at school by addressing barriers to and promoting engagement in learning and teaching. This includes prevention, early intervention, referral and follow up procedures within a system of care.¹
2. Schools are encouraged to develop and maintain a positive school climate ensuring a global approach to addressing barriers to learning and promoting resilience in children. Current laws regarding the prevention of hazing, bullying, and intimidation should be fully implemented as an essential element in the protection of student mental health and the fostering of a positive school climate.²
3. According to the Tennessee Comprehensive School Counseling Model and other curriculum standards³, schools should provide students with effective early intervention activities such as social and emotional learning, positive behavior supports and strength-based developmental assets.
4. School personnel are encouraged to create a plan whereby appropriate staff can provide proactive on-site support services to students having social, emotional, and mental health concerns, including those students that do not meet criteria for special education services.⁴

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5. Local Educational Agencies/schools should encourage school staff and administrators to attend professional development on how to identify warning signs of emotional and behavioral barriers to learning, how to address such barriers, and promote engagement in learning.⁵ School staff new to the district should receive this professional development in a timely manner.
6. Local Education Agencies/schools should have clearly identified referral protocols for in-school student support that is easily accessible to all students, families, and school personnel. Intentional effort should be made to reduce stigma, keep the referral process simple and user friendly, and provide a variety of strategies to assist students in need.
7. Local Educational Agencies/schools should create linkages and Memorandums of Understanding between schools and community resources. These will include agreements regarding the responsibility of both entities with respect to working together (e.g. formal linkages, weaving resources together, sharing information, making and accepting referrals, intervention during and after a crisis).⁶ These agreements should be reviewed and updated as needed.
8. Consistent with HIPAA⁷ and FERPA⁸ standards, a plan should be created for maintaining the confidentiality of each student throughout the referral process.
9. As prescribed by existing policy unless otherwise specified by law, ⁹ school level policies should assure parental consent prior to making a student referral.
10. Schools should facilitate smooth transitions for students who are entering and exiting the classroom due to involvement with community mental health treatment, Department of Children's Services including juvenile justice services, or other child serving programs.
11. Each Local Educational Agency should appoint a team leader to oversee overall implementation of these guidelines. Team leaders should engage the participation of families¹⁰, students, educators, community mental health providers, local Department of Children's Services, and local juvenile court representatives, as well as all student support divisions within the district (including school social work, school counseling, school psychology, and coordinated school health) in the development of local policies and agreements. These local policies should address routine concerns as well as crisis response. Referral policies should be family driven, student guided, and whenever possible allow for universal access. This team should meet regularly to review the integration and alignment of services.

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12. Successful strategies used to address barriers to learning include promoting a positive school climate, providing in-school support to students that enhance their social and emotional development, establishing clear and effective relationships with community agencies, and developing effective transition practices between schools and community programs and therefore should be included in all continuous school improvement planning as well as the Tennessee Comprehensive System-wide Planning Process.
13. The Tennessee Department of Education recommends that local education agencies adopt consistent use of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment Instrument (CANS). The CANS provides a common language, objective criteria to support decisions about intervention plans and intensity of services, monitors progress through outcome measures, and supports quality improvement initiatives. Information from the CANS serves as a valuable tool to assist in making decisions regarding the nature and intensity of targeted student services within the school and with partnering agencies. The CANS is consistent with system of care values and principles, focusing on the needs of children and families. The use of CANS in Tennessee school systems provides a common language and assessment instrument shared among child serving systems in Tennessee.
14. Local Education Agency and school level policies should honor cultural diversity, provide culturally and linguistically competent services, and respect the dignity of all individuals.

¹ See T.C.A. §49-1-1002

² See T.C.A. §49-6-801, §49-6-1016, §49-6-4216, §49-2-120

³ Tennessee School Counseling Model, Policy 5.103, pp. 60-74

⁴ See T.C.A. §49-5-302, §49-6-303, TN Dept. of Ed. SBOE rule 0520-2-2-.26, SBOE

Standards and Guidelines 5.103

⁵ See T.C.A. §49-6-3004(c) (1)

⁶ See T.C.A. §33-1-308

⁷ See Public Law 104-191

⁸ See 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99

⁹ See T.C.A. §10-7-504(4) (A), §§33-3-206—33-3-209, §37-1-403, §37-1-605, §33-8-202

¹⁰ See TN SBOE Policy, Standards, and Guidelines 4.207

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Additional resources:

State

Tennessee Office of Coordinated School Health, Tennessee Department of Education

www.tennessee.gov/education/schoolhealth

Tennessee Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Guidelines

www.state.tn.us/education/ci/doc/tncomschconsmdl.doc

Tennessee Voices for Children

www.tnvoices.org

Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network

www.tspn.org

National

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Mental Health

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/mentalhealth/index.htm>

Center for School Mental Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine

<http://csmh.umaryland.edu/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

<http://www.casel.org/>

National Community of Practice on Collaborative School Behavioral Health

<http://www.sharedwork.org/section.cfm?as=4&ms=4>

National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/find.asp>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

<http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Program Guide

http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_index.htm

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

<http://www.pbis.org/main.htm>

Search Institute – Developmental Assets

<http://www.search-institute.org>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://www.samhsa.gov>

Tennessee National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

<http://www.namitn.org/>

UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

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