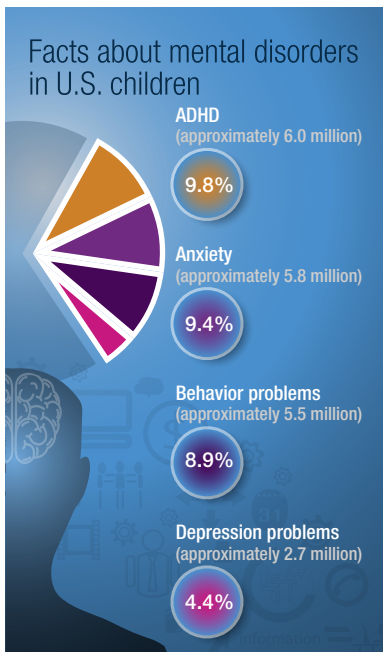




PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES

Funding Social and Emotional Supports in K-12 School Districts



www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html

Expanding School-based Social and Emotional Supports: Focus on Funding and Outcomes

In response to the heightened need from the pandemic, many states have recently relied on Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to pay for school-based supports (SBS) dedicated to addressing students' mental health and wellbeing. ESSER funds are set to expire in the fall of 2024 and therefore are not a long-term solution. To implement robust, innovative and sustainable school-based support models, school districts must strategically assess and leverage available resources. **Districts should consider engaging in the following strategies to expand social and emotional supports for students:**

Strategy 1:



Prioritize district budget to invest in school-based supports

Districts will need to align their investments and operating systems with their priorities for student wellbeing. Districts should develop clear outcome-based plans for how to utilize student-based social and emotional supports and rigorously assess how their budgets and operational systems support these goals. They can make necessary adjustments by assessing the efficiencies of their systems and finding cost savings.

Key Activities:

- Determine benchmarks and outcome targets by reviewing **peer states** and **leading national practices**.
- Conduct literature review, interview national experts and peers, and leverage national partnerships to select the **best tools to measure progress** and the **best fitting model** to deliver services.
- Review and align state legislation with practice activities to ensure **protection of student privacy**.
- Review and/or build budgets and related controls that ensure **efficient and effective** investment in school-based programming.

A&M worked with Detroit Public Schools (DPS) to transform their Special Education services by assessing the financial and operating model, conducting stakeholder interviews, identifying cost savings and redesigning the department's systems to identify opportunities for improved student outcomes. In partnership, DPS achieved unprecedented levels of compliance in Special Education program efforts while achieving more than \$34 million in net savings.

Strategy 2: Collaborate more effectively with community providers



Schools may lack specific skills or funds to deliver the full array of needed services for social and emotional supports, but the community may be positioned to help. By forming targeted partnerships and relationships with community resources, combined with a method for managing referrals and collaborations, schools can better leverage their communities.

A&M mapped out a Georgia behavioral health crisis safety net system as a precursor to recommending psychiatric inpatient capacity modifications.

A&M implemented a statewide evidence-based care transition program in New Hampshire to help people safely and reliably return to their communities following an inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

Key Activities:

- Engage local service networks to 1) **catalogue available services** by competency and location 2) detail **referral process** and 3) list contact information and accepted payment methods.
- Develop a decision-making tool for **matching an identified need** to appropriate services.
- Create or participate in regional/local planning committees to **establish a culture of school/community collaboration**.
- Confirm and clearly **define consent and information sharing policies and procedures**.
- Set up **referral tracking** capabilities either using out-of-the-box technology or a homegrown system.

Strategy 3: Access available funding and resources



School districts may have access to new federal, state and philanthropic funding sources that will allow them to bolster their school-based social and emotional supports. Here are three key opportunities districts can explore:

- 1. Leverage Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP):** In the spring of 2023, the federal government shared [new guidance and flexibilities](#) to support schools in more easily receiving federal funding through Federal Financial Participation (FFP) to support SBS for children with Medicaid or CHIP, including streamlined billing and new state blueprints.
- 2. Access and utilize state and federal grants:** The [majority](#) of states appropriate specific funds to support student mental health, and a number of federal grants under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) can be used to fund school-based social and emotional supports—potentially including Title IA, Title IIA, IDEA Part B and Title IV Part A funds. State and federal competitive grants dedicated to social and emotional supports and learning have been issued recently and will remain budget-dependent.
- 3. Explore philanthropy:** Philanthropic partners have recognized the tremendous, heightened need to address student mental health and have stepped in to provide resources, training and technical assistance. Various national and state organizations could help supplement schools' program plans and service offerings.

Strategy 3:**Access available funding and resources (continued)****Key Activities:**

- Investigate early adoption state blueprints for securing maximum federal reimbursement for SBS.
- Identify additional **available federal and state funds**, especially those being used by peer states.
- Develop and manage a thorough **work plan** spanning planning, design, data capture, program implementation and quality management.
- Lead internal and/or external stakeholder sessions to **identify the most significant social and emotional support needs**, followed by research of non-Medicaid funding opportunities. Develop an action plan for **applying to new grants**.
- **Evaluate the use of current funds** through review of profit and loss statements (P&Ls) and cost reports, matched with client participation and outcomes. Generate a summary of findings and related recommendations.

A&M helps clients with grant strategy and acquisition, including a recent engagement to lead the strategy development, stakeholder engagement and grant application drafting process around U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)'s Good Jobs Challenge grant program, designed to fund innovative solutions to meeting hiring needs. A&M supported a grant proposal that was selected as one of 32 awardees out of 509 applicants (six percent award rate), bringing home over \$8 million in grant dollars for the region.

Interested in discussing how your school or district can build your school-based support model, strategically leverage funding and improve mental health outcomes for students? Contact us to learn more.

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