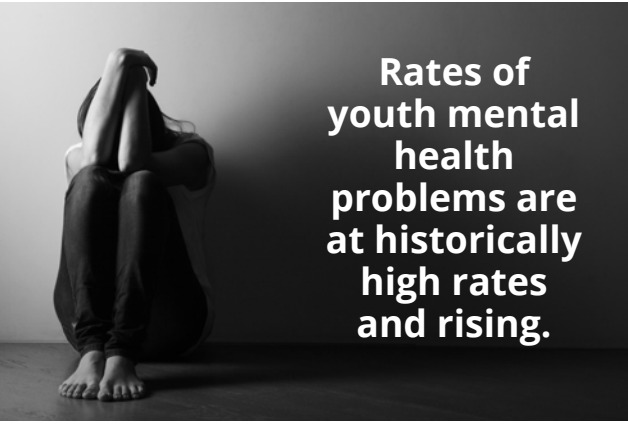


# The Case for School Mental Health



**Rates of youth mental health problems are at historically high rates and rising.**

- One in five children and adolescents have a diagnosable mental health disorder, such as depression, anxiety, or attention deficit disorder (NAMI, 2015).
- National surveillance data show that 30% of adolescents have felt so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing usual activities. 33% more Washington students report feeling hopeless in 2018 than in 2008 (HYS, 2018).
- Suicidal thoughts among Washington students have increased 35% from 2008 to 2018 and the number of youth planning suicide has increased by 39% (HYS, 2018).

## The Covid-19 pandemic has only increased the crisis in children's mental health.

Over 50% of young people say COVID has negatively impacted their mental health, due to decreased social connections, missed rituals of childhood and adolescence, economic stress on families, and the strains of virtual learning. These impacts are likely to endure long after current COVID restrictions are lifted (Am. Society for Suicide Prevention, 2020).



**Providing comprehensive mental health services is critical to student academic success, school safety, and the well-being of our young people.**

## School mental health is associated with positive mental health outcomes for children and youth.

A review of 43 studies found that school-based services are effective at decreasing mental health problems, with targeted services (for individual students with mental health needs) showing particularly strong effects (Sanchez et al., 2017).

**School-based mental health services promote positive academic outcomes.**

- A review of hundreds of studies found that school-wide social-emotional learning (SEL) programs improve academic progress among students by 13% on average (Durlak et al., 2011).
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has been shown to return \$14 in savings from reduced school dropout for every dollar spent (Washington State Inst. on Public Policy, 2019).

**School mental health services are essential to creating and sustaining safe schools.** Increased access to mental health services and supports in schools is vital to improving the physical and psychological safety of our students and schools, as well as academic performance and problem-solving skills. Availability of comprehensive school mental health promotes a school culture in which students feel safe to report safety concerns, which is proven to be among the most effective school safety strategies.



Children and youth receive mental health care in schools more frequently than any other setting, including doctors' offices or mental health clinics (Duong, Bruns et al., 2020). Research also suggests school mental health can close gaps in access for historically underserved populations, such as youth of color (Lyon et al., 2013).



# Taking Effective School Mental Health to Scale in Washington

## 2021 POLICY & FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Washington State – and its schools and students – will benefit from:**

- Development and deployment of a **statewide accountability framework** for a multi-tiered system of school mental health support (MTSS), that can aid districts to develop plans and stay on track

*Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) 2021–23 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package (DP) on Supporting Students through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support builds regional capacity and professional development for the implementation of MTSS via 12.0 full-time equivalent MTSS Implementation Specialists and two state-level coordinators.*

- Research-based **professional development for school professionals and technical assistance for districts** on implementing MTSS and effective SMH.



- A **statewide youth mental health surveillance system**, that mobilizes data already available from sources such as school data, student surveys, and state health records, that keeps the state focused on child and family mental health and allows for immediate mobilization when “hot spots” (e.g., suicides, emergency room visits, youth distress) emerge.

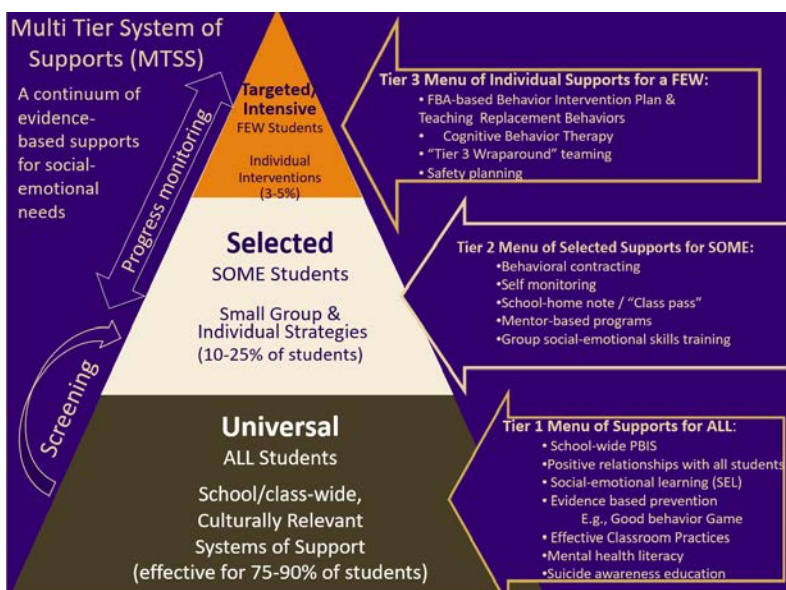
*Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) 2021–23 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package (DP) on Building Staffing Capacity to Support Student Well-Being increases staff allocations for school counselors, school nurses, social workers, psychologists, family engagement coordinators, and student and staff safety personnel no later than the 2024-25 school year.*

- **Funding for districts and schools**, to help them implement MTSS to fill gaps in the continuum of SMH services.



## Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

*School mental health is most effective when provided through a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that integrates effort from both school-employed and community mental health professionals.*



MTSS encompasses the continuum of need, enabling schools to promote mental wellness for all students, identify and address problems before they escalate or become chronic, and provide increasingly intensive, data-driven services for individual students as needed.

**[Learn more about MTSS on the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's website.](#)**

# Resources & References

## NATIONAL RESOURCES

- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Interconnected Systems Framework Implementation Guide](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness: Mental Health Facts - Children and Teens](#)
- [The National Center for School Mental Health \(NCSMH\)](#)

## REGIONAL RESOURCES

- [The University of Washington School Mental Health, Assessment, Research, and Training Center](#)
- [The School Mental Health Supplement to the Northwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center](#)
- [Forefront Suicide Prevention Center](#)
- [Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\)](#)
- [Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: 2021–23 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package \(DP\) on Supporting Students through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#)
- [Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: 2021–23 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package \(DP\) on Building Staffing Capacity to Support Student Well-Being](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy: Cost Benefit of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(SWPBIS\)](#)
- [2018 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey - Data Brief: Mental Health](#)
- [2018 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey - Infographic](#)
- [Statewide Analysis of Forecasted Behavioral Health Impacts from COVID-19 - September Update](#)
- [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Behavioral Health Impacts after COVID-19 Shelter-at-Home Orders: What to Expect and Ways to Prepare for the Return to School](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH & RESOURCES

- Duong, M., Bruns, E., Lee, K., Cox, S., Coifman, J., Mayworm, A., & Lyon, A. (2020). Rates of mental health service utilization by children and adolescents in schools and other common service settings: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-020-01080-9>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x/full>
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- Sanchez, A. L., Cornacchio, D., Poznanski, B., Golik, A. M., Chou, T., & Comer, J. S. (2018). The Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Services for Elementary-Aged Children: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57(3), 153–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.11.022>
- Swain-Bradway, J., Lindstrom Johnson, S., Bradshaw, C., McIntosh, K.. (2017). What are the economic costs of implementing SWPBIS in comparison to the benefits from reducing suspensions? Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). <https://www.pbis.org/resource/what-are-the-economic-costs-of-implementing-swpbis-in-comparison-to-the-benefits-from-reducing-suspensions>