

Executive Summary

School Mental Health Support Program (SMHSP)

Overview

The School Mental Health Support Program (SMHSP), established under HB24-1406, constitutes a strategic initiative within the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) aimed at delivering high-quality training, resources, and implementation support to the existing workforce of public school educators. The program emphasizes supporting schools in rural areas and schools with students who do not have equitable access to mental health care.

The Trauma-Responsive Implementation and Practice (TRIP) program housed at the Kempe Center, University of Colorado, Anschutz in partnership with the University of Denver Butler Institute for Families, and in collaboration with the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), will establish a robust infrastructure to deliver high-quality training, resources, and support to public schools in Colorado. This initiative aims to address the mental health needs of students by implementing and expanding the School Mental Health Support Program (SMHSP) aligned with the Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) framework.

The School Mental Health Support Program (SMHSP) is a structured initiative designed to enhance mental wellness for students and educators across Colorado. In alignment with the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), SMHSP will provide evidence-based training, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources to schools, focusing on trauma-informed practices, mindfulness, and educator wellness. The program aims to address mental health challenges, reduce educator burnout, and create inclusive school environments.

Implementation Strategy

The SMHSP will be executed in a phased approach, ensuring a sustainable and scalable model for participating districts and schools. The four key phases include:

Exploration & Readiness Assessment (Year 1)

- Engage districts and schools through marketing and partnerships.
- Conduct comprehensive readiness and needs assessments using surveys, focus groups and listening sessions.
- Develop district- and school-specific implementation plans, identifying key priorities and strengths.

Training & Capacity Building (Years 1-2)

- Develop and deliver a structured training curriculum covering mental health literacy, cognitive-behavioral strategies, trauma-informed practices, and educator wellness.
- Offer training via web-based modules, in-person workshops, and a Train-the-Trainer model.
- Utilize a learning collaborative approach and facilitate monthly Communities of Practice aligned with MTSS tiers to reinforce learning and peer collaboration.

Implementation & Coaching (Years 2-3)

- Establish school-based implementation teams with designated leads who receive advanced training and coaching.
- Conduct Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) cycles using the Plan-Do-Study-Act framework.
- Provide targeted coaching sessions to support effective practice application.

Sustainability & Scale-Up (Years 3-5)

- Expand the program to 400 schools by FY2028, focusing on underserved and rural communities.
- Support schools in sustaining practices through trained internal staff and leadership engagement.
- Conduct ongoing evaluation and refinements to ensure long-term impact.

Target Population

- **Students (Grades 6-12):** Particularly those in rural and underserved schools with limited access to mental health resources.
- **Educators & School Staff:** Teachers, counselors, and administrators seeking training and resources to support student mental health.
- **Schools:** Rural and underserved districts requiring enhanced mental health support systems.

Key Program Components

- **Training Modules:** Covering trauma-informed practices, cognitive behavioral strategies, self-regulation and resiliency skills, social justice in education, culturally responsive environments, suicide prevention, and mindfulness techniques.
- **Community Engagement:** Collaboration with various stakeholders working in the school systems, including the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).
- **Evaluation & Continuous Improvement:** Using pre- and post-training assessments, feedback surveys, and fidelity monitoring to measure program impact. Work with the BHA external evaluator to implement the evaluation plan.
- **Sustainability Measures:** Implementing a Train-the-Trainer approach to embed expertise within schools, reducing reliance on external training resources.

Conclusion

The SMHSP represents a strategic, evidence-based effort to enhance mental health support in Colorado schools. By systematically implementing training, fostering school-wide capacity, and ensuring sustainability through embedded coaching and leadership development, SMHSP will positively impact student well-being and educator effectiveness. The program's goal is to create lasting improvements in school mental health practices, ultimately benefiting 400 schools and thousands of students by FY2028.