

# *Mental Health*

## *Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)*

### *Recommendations 2019–2020*

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) formed a workgroup in October of 2019 based on needs identified by the full Council. Workgroup members self-identified based on their concern for and interest in the development of supports to address the growing mental health needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) across the state. The workgroup is comprised of four SEAC members representing families, school district staff and other state agencies.

The purpose of this workgroup is to identify existing supports, challenges and opportunities to expand capacity to provide better access to these critical mental health services for students with IEPs in need of these services.

In order to support the ongoing needs of students with IEPs to be successful and receive and ensure their ability to learn in the least restrictive environment, this workgroup makes the following recommendations:

1. Support state funding for a minimum 1.0 counselor for every school building, reprioritizing their work to align with the American School Counseling Association's (ASCA) recommendations (reference ASCA mode 250.1) in order to better address the mental health needs of students while shifting priorities from the current focus on scheduling, credit retrieval and tracking graduation requirements.
2. Fully fund special education to align with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommended model for school psychologists to include one (1) school psychologist for every 500-700 students.
3. That OSPI provide specialized training, guidance, and technical assistance regarding the provision of supports allowed for under WAC 392-172A-01155 for the provision of mental health counseling as a related service on a student's IEP.
4. That OSPI create a task force to identify baseline mental health staffing needs and priorities to address systemic challenges for school based mental health professionals and support an effective workforce of highly qualified professional mental health staff.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's commitment to equity as reflected in their value statement that "Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools" reflects our shared commitment to supporting students with mental health needs to receive the supports required to experience their education in the least restrictive environment. The SEAC Mental Health sub-committee appreciates the time and consideration of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.