

Supporting school-based mental health systems

This document provides ideas on planning activities and funding types that could be braided to support behavioral and mental health systems' work. Below are suggestions only, and any activities should be data informed and approved by the appropriate program office.

Assessment and Planning

It is important that a diverse team conducts a comprehensive assessment of current mental and behavioral health services, resources and supports, such as completing the [School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation \(SHAPE\)](#). Once an assessment is complete, your team can use different tools (such as the [Hexagon Planning Tool](#)) to prioritize interventions and activities, including needed partnership and required funding. Using a data-informed approach, ensures gaps are addressed. Data should be continuously collected and regularly assessed to ensure the chosen activities are addressing the gaps as intended.

Funding

Federal Formula Funding

Districts have access to federal formula funding (e.g., Title IV, Part A, etc.) that could potentially fund activities such as those listed below to build a comprehensive mental health system. Please note that no school or LEA is required to use its federal and allowable state funds for programs or activities highlighted in this document. For complete information on how different federal funds may be used, contact the appropriate program office.

- **Family/Parent Engagement** (salary/benefits, resources, informational sessions, programs, promotion of events)
- **Mental Health** (salary/benefits, coordination of health services, evidence-based programs, services, professional development)
- **Drug and Violence Prevention** (programs for students, families, and parents)
- **Community Partnerships** (salary/benefits, partnerships with local healthcare clinics, informational sessions for parents and families, outreach activities)
- **Dropout Prevention** (salary/benefits, student resources, professional development, equipment, supplies)
- **Employee Well-Being** (professional development, consultant fees, leadership development)
- **School Safety** (salary/benefits, equipment, professional development, leadership development)
- **Curriculum** (that includes mental/behavioral health topics)



- **Professional Development** (mental health literacy, suicide prevention)
- **Physical environment** (sensory rooms, alternative spaces (non-construction))

Medicaid

Your district may be able to access Medicaid funding for behavioral health services. The [Medicaid School-based Behavioral Health Services and Billing Toolkit](#) provides details on avenues to provide and bill for services, requirements to become a licensed behavioral health agency, and best practices for working with managed care organizations.

Other discretionary (competitive) funding

Active grant opportunities

- **[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)** – *Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act Grants (NOGO # SP-25-001)* - Eligibility for this program is statutorily limited to domestic public and private nonprofit entities that are current or former Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program recipients. The purpose of this program is to prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth and young adults ages 12 to 20 in communities throughout the United States. Award recipients will be expected to implement activities that support capacity building such as implementing evidence-based community approaches, enhancing collaboration, cooperation and coordination among communities, federal, state, and local and tribal governments, and convening Town Halls. **Applications are due March 17, 2025.**

How to find out about funding opportunities

Grants that support school-based mental health systems are periodically released by various entities. As they are all on different schedules, it is a good idea to subscribe to various newsletters and listservs to be notified about funding opportunities. Here are a few suggestions:

- OSPI Student Engagement and Support Newsletter: [SES Engage Newsletter and Alerts](#)
- [Greenlights Grant Initiative](#) (school safety grant list)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grants Dashboard](#) and [Forecasted Opportunities](#)
- [Grants.gov](#), set up custom email notification based on saved searches, such as "school mental health": and read their "[How to determine general funding eligibility](#)" blog post
- Get connected with **local** foundations, community-based organizations, etc. that award funds or could partner to write and apply collectively for funding.

Other resources

- [Blending and Braiding Webinar Series hosted by the Department of Education](#)
- [Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds to Support Student Success](#)
- [Model District Template: Student Social, Emotional and Behavioral, and Mental Health Recognition, Screening, and Response](#)
- [School Mental Health Quality Guide: Funding & Sustainability](#)