

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 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 (Apple Health) and School-Based Services

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can use [Medicaid](#) reimbursement to support and expand student services through three pathways:

1. **School-Based Health Care Services (SBHS)** – Reimbursement for medically necessary services delivered to Medicaid-eligible students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
2. **Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC)** - Partial reimbursement for school staff time spend doing administrative tasks. MAC supports the broader school health ecosystem and can sustain positions such as nurses, counselors, psychologist, social works, and administrative coordinators.
3. **Contracting through Managed Care Organizations (MCO) and Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BH-ASOs)** - LEAs contract with MCOs and BH-ASOs directly for medically necessary, Medicaid-covered services not included in an IEP or IFSP. 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.

Learn more about accessing Medicaid at [Washington Apple Health \(Medicaid\): School-Based Services](#).

Safety Net

[Safety net funding](#) is available to school districts with a demonstrated capacity for Special Education funding in excess of state and federal funding otherwise provided. Note that billing to Medicaid for School-Based Health Care Services must be utilized before a district can be eligible for maximum Safety Net funding.

Other discretionary (competitive) funding

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
- [Best Starts for Kids Blog](#)
- [The Athena Forum](#)
- 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](#)