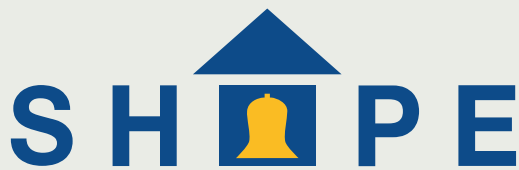


# School Mental Health Quality Guide

## Impact



School Health Assessment  
and Performance Evaluation System



**School Mental Health Quality Guide: Impact** is part of a collection of resources developed by the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. The Quality Guides provide information to help school mental health systems advance the quality of their services and supports. This guide contains background information on the impact of implementing a comprehensive school mental health system, best practices, possible action steps, examples from the field, and resources.

### **Recommended Citation**

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The mission of the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) is to strengthen policies and programs in school mental health to improve learning and promote success for America's youth.

# Impact

refers to the long-term effects or changes that occur as a result of the programs, practices, and/or policies implemented within a comprehensive school mental health system.

Documenting and reporting the impact of school mental health systems to a wide range of stakeholders is critical for sustainability. Having data readily available on the impact of school mental health systems allows for the opportunity to describe successes and advocate for ongoing funding, support, and resources, with the support of your district.

## What **types of outcomes** does school mental health impact?

- **Educational:** Improved grades, achievement testing, and/or teacher retention
- **Health:** Improved health and well-being of students and staff members, including social, emotional, and behavioral health
- **School Climate and Safety:** Improved relationships between staff and students, reduced school violence, and increased sense of student and staff safety
- **Cost:** Cost-savings related to reduced expenditures in staffing, services, and preventable outcomes like dropout and suspension

## Why document and report impact?

- Understand successes and challenges to identify areas for improvement.
- Use data to inform continuous quality improvement such as adding, removing, or changing a service or support.
- Use data to advocate for ongoing funding, support, and resources.

## How is impact documented and reported?

To document and report impact of any school mental health service or support, your team will need to:

- Use data systems to track student progress in the service(s) being evaluated.
- Document outcomes, disaggregate data, and report to stakeholders.



# Document impact of Tier 2 & 3 services and supports



## Best Practices

### Consider:

- How many unduplicated\* students were identified through a systematic screening or other referral process to possibly receive Early Intervention (Tier 2) and/or Treatment (Tier 3) services and supports?
- What was the total number of unduplicated\* students who received at least one Tier 2 or Tier 3 school mental health service?
  - This includes any school-based Tier 2 or Tier 3 school mental health service provided by school or community-employed providers.
- How many unduplicated\* students who received Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 services and supports have documented improvement in educational functioning?

### Examples of documented improvement:

- Grades
  - Attendance
  - Benchmark assessments
  - Annual Yearly Progress
  - State testing
  - Discipline data
  - IEP review
- How many unduplicated\* students who received Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 services and supports have documented improvement in educational functioning?
    - Examples of documented improvement include screening, assessment and/or progress monitoring data collected from students, families, and/or teachers which demonstrate improvements in social-emotional wellness, mental health functioning, and/or target problem areas.

\* If a student received more than one type of Tier 2 or 3 service, the student should only be counted once.





# Action Steps

## 1. Define Tier 2 and 3 services and supports.

- Work with your team to clearly define Tier 2 and 3 services and supports and clarify which services and supports fit these criteria in your school or district.

## 2. Clarify how students are identified.

- Develop or improve a systematic process or set of processes by which students are identified for Tier 2 and 3 services and supports.
- Examine referral sources, patterns, and procedures as well as systematic nomination or screening methods to identify students who may benefit from Tier 2 and/or 3 services and supports.

## 3. Use a good tracking system.

- Use an efficient system to track students who are eligible for Tier 2 or 3 services and enrolled or included in an intervention. Further, having a Student Information System that allows tracking of progress as a result of services or supports received is preferred.
- Oftentimes, data systems that schools or their community partners use are not customized to track students receiving specific interventions or metrics to track their progress over time. Teams should assess if they can customize and use current data systems to access needed data to monitor who receives services and measure progress and the impact of their school mental health services, or if the team needs to select an alternative tracking system.

## 4. Decide who is reporting, on what, when.

- Ideally, any school team member (*school-employed, school-based, or community-employed personnel*) providing Tier 2 and/or 3 mental health services and supports to students would report on the students they are serving to a centralized student information system. School mental health teams may decide to start with specific services, students served, grades, schools, or team members while testing out and improving tracking systems before scaling up to all providers.
- The data collection and reporting time frame should be customized based on feasibility for all stakeholders.

## Recommended Definitions

### Mental Health *Early Intervention* (Tier 2) Services & Supports

Tier 2/Early Intervention services and supports address the mental health concerns of students who are experiencing mild distress, functional impairment, or are at risk for a given problem or concern. These students can be identified through needs assessments, screening, referrals, or another school teaming processes. When mental health needs are identified early, and culturally responsive, anti-racist, and equitable (CARE) supports are put in place, positive youth development is promoted, and the chronicity and severity of mental health concerns can be eliminated or reduced. Sometimes these are referred to as “selective” mental health “prevention” or “secondary prevention” services.

### Mental Health *Treatment* (Tier 3) Services & Supports

Tier 3/Treatment services and supports address the mental health concerns of students who are already experiencing significant distress and functional impairment. Sometimes these are referred to as “indicated” mental health “intervention”, “tertiary” or “intensive” services, and are individualized to specific student needs.



## Resource: Student Information Systems and Brief

District and school teams need feasible, systematic ways to identify when students may benefit from additional academic, social, emotional, and behavioral services and supports; to track service provision; and to monitor how students respond. Student information systems are a mechanism for capturing these types of data. The sophistication of the systems varies and may range from a simple Excel file to a more complex, web-based platform for gathering, analyzing, and reporting data.

### Student Information Systems work to...

- Promote early identification of students who need additional supports.
- Support decision-making about how to match student needs to services.
- Identify gaps in services that may need to be filled.
- Alert staff when a service or support is not helping a student.
- Document the impact of services and supports on target outcomes.

### The NCSMH Student Information Systems Brief reviews...

- Benefits of using student information systems.
- Commonly used student information systems.
- How to select the best student system for your district.



## Example from the Field

**One rural school district in Kansas created a systematic approach to document the impact of Tier 2 and 3 services and supports on educational, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes.** Modeled after their documentation of Tiers 2 and 3 academic services, their team developed new codes in PowerSchool (*a student information system*) to track referrals and provision of Tier 2 and 3 mental health services. Their data showed that Tier 2 and 3 mental health services and supports were provided to students with high levels of disciplinary events (68%), suspensions (55%), chronic absence (52%), and in poverty for three or more consecutive school years (65%). Based on one school year of data, they found that of students receiving Tier 2 and 3 mental health services, 65% no longer required Tier 2 Language Arts supports and 61% no longer required Tier 2 Mathematics supports, highlighting the interplay between academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes.



## Remember:

There are no “Tier 3 students,” but rather students who need or receive Tier 3 services or supports at a given time. Students may benefit from Tier 1, 2, and/or 3 supports for their academic, social, emotional, and behavioral wellness and success throughout their school years, and their needs and skills will change over time.



# Document impact on educational outcomes



## Best Practices

- Develop a theory of change about how specific mental health services or supports impact educational outcomes for students across cultural backgrounds and identities to decide which educational outcomes to focus on.
- Identify existing and potential educational outcome data, including:
  - Grades
  - Benchmark test scores
  - Gifted and talented placement
  - Attendance
  - Performance test scores
  - College and career readiness
  - Achievement
  - Office discipline referrals
  - Involvement or leadership in extracurricular activities
  - Chronic absence
  - Suspensions and expulsions
- Develop a plan for data collection.
- Establish data infrastructure that allows for easy collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Examine educational data to understand student progress and service impact.
- Engage diverse individuals (e.g., students, caregivers, teachers, other school staff) to provide qualitative feedback (e.g., testimonials, critiques) about the impact of school mental health services and supports on educational success.

### Educational Outcome Examples

- Achievement/Benchmark test scores
- Performance test scores
- Attendance
- Grades



# Document impact on social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes



## Best Practices

- Develop a theory of change about how specific mental health services or supports impact social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for students across cultural backgrounds and identities to decide which outcomes to focus on.
- Identify existing and potential social, emotional, and behavioral outcome data, including:
  - Social/emotional/behavioral health screenings and assessments
  - Behavioral observations
  - School climate data
  - Strengths assessments
  - Crisis incidents
- Develop a plan for data collection with student and family input, ensuring representation of diverse identities and cultural backgrounds.
- Establish data infrastructure that allows for easy collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Examine social, emotional, and behavioral data to understand student progress and service impact.
- Engage individuals (e.g., students, caregivers, teachers, other school staff) across diverse cultural backgrounds and identities to provide qualitative feedback (e.g., testimonials, critiques) about the impact of school mental health services and supports on social, emotional, and behavioral functioning.



### Social, Emotional, & Behavioral Outcome Examples

- Student self-reported distress & well-being
- Suspensions & expulsions
- Behavior observations
- Teacher well-being
- Crisis incidents
- Office referrals
- School climate



## Tip Select educational, social, emotional, and behavioral data that...

- Are **likely to be affected** by school mental health services and supports.
- Are **readily available or could be reasonably collected**.
- Are of **most importance and are most useful** to different groups who use, fund, or are impacted by the services and supports.
- **Can be shared** within and beyond the school team.





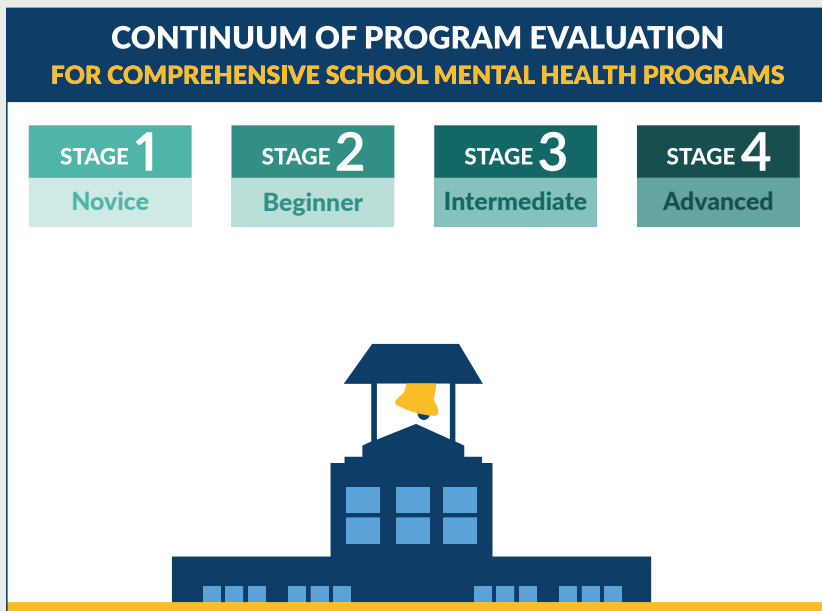
## Resource: Program Evaluation How-To

Schools and districts may need to build toward documenting the impact of school mental health services and supports. **Implementing a Comprehensive School Mental Health Program**, a web-based module, includes information about the continuum of program evaluation and how schools can increase the complexity of what type of data they can use and in what way to measure impact over time as their system becomes more advanced.

The module provides details about the value of using data to evaluate school mental health impact, including supporting:

- Accountability and sustainability
- Evidence of service quality and impacts
- A range of perspectives about the program
- Reduced confirmation bias
- A data-driven approach

The learning module provides guidance at each level of a *Continuum of Program Evaluation for Comprehensive School Mental Health Programs*, as seen below.



- At the **novice** stage, program evaluation typically focuses on describing the program and the services it provides.
- At the **beginner** stage, the program evaluation focus often shifts to describing the academic and psychosocial characteristics of students being served.
- At the **intermediate** stage, programs often track student progress and outcomes over time.
- At the **advanced** stage, programs typically begin to examine long-term outcomes for students and compare them to similar students who did not receive services.

Adapted from the [The National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion & Youth Violence Prevention](#)



## Tip Develop and Use a Theory of Change

In the context of school mental health, developing a Theory of Change can help school and district teams map short and long-term outcomes they expect to result from various mental health services and supports.



## Resource

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's **Developing a Theory of Change: Practical Theory of Change Guidance, Templates, and Examples** provides helpful information for teams to create a concrete Theory of Change.

# Disaggregate student mental health service and support data\* to examine student outcomes based on sub-population characteristics.

\* Disaggregating student mental health services and support data can illuminate whether there are differences in student outcomes based on various demographic characteristics. This process can also help teams better understand whether outcomes differ based on key characteristics (such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, or intensity of need) and design strategies to reduce disproportionalities in access to, or effectiveness of, school mental health services and supports.



## Best Practices

- **Review current student information or data collection for variables that capture relevant demographic characteristics of your student body, such as:**
  - Age
  - Sex
  - Gender identity and expression
  - Sexual orientation
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - National origin
  - Language
  - Disability status
  - Religion
  - Socioeconomic status
- **Add any variables relevant to demographic groups that are not represented and develop a plan for data collection, evaluation, and reporting.**
- **Identify key student outcomes that can inform action steps to improve service provision, such as:**
  - School connectedness
  - Achievement of individual goals
  - Receipt of mental health services and supports relative to referrals
  - Sense of safety at school
  - Performance test scores
  - Social, emotional, behavioral and/or functional improvement
- **Examine key student outcomes for all students, and compare those results to outcomes for students in demographic groups of interest.**
- **Based on findings from data collection, develop strategies as a team to address inequities or disparities in mental health access or outcomes.**





# Action Steps

## 1. Consider characteristics to examine:

- Gender
- Race
- Severity of mental health needs
- Grade level
- Ethnicity
- Length of time in the district
- Academic performance
- English proficiency
- Types of tiered services received

## 2. Consider potential outcomes to examine:

- School connectedness
- Academic performance
- Sense of safety at school
- Achievement of individual goals
- Disciplinary incidents
- Teacher ratings of student functioning
- Enrollment in mental health services and supports relative to referrals
- Social, emotional, behavioral and/or functional improvement

## 3. Track disaggregated data to help determine patterns over time.

### This can help identify:

- Patterns of sub-group performance from year-to-year or the beginning-to-the-end of one year.
- Whether disparities are decreasing, staying the same, or increasing over time.

## 4. Partner with students, families, and community members to understand the data patterns observed when data are disaggregated and work together to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to address disparities in student access to services and/or outcomes.







## Resources

- *The National Forum on Educational Statistics* has a **Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Disaggregated Data on Racial/Ethnic Subgroups** that provides concrete steps for the process of collecting, analyzing, and implementing changes based on subgroup data.
- **The Blueprint for Using Data to Reduce Disparities/Disproportionalities in Human Services and Behavioral Health Care**, developed by AIR and the Cultural Competence Action Team of SAMHSA's Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health, helps communities and states develop and implement data-driven strategies.



## Example from the Field

*Collecting and Disaggregating Data on Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs):*

**The Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) of Connecticut** uses a statewide electronic platform, the EBP Tracker, to collect data on evidence-based interventions delivered in schools and other community settings. Results from their analyses show that using EBPs improved outcomes and reduced or eliminated disparities for children of color compared to usual care.



# Report the impact to a broad and diverse group of stakeholders\*

\* For example, youth, families, school and community partners, district leadership, existing or potential funders, non-education community partners, state agencies, local and statewide representatives.



## Best Practices

- Develop quarterly or semi-annual reports and newsletters or host meetings to share your data with those who submitted or contributed to the data, or are interested in or help fund school mental health.
- Prepare a compelling and clear 1-2 page document that communicates the impact of school mental health services, with terms and graphics that consider the language abilities and communication styles of the intended audiences (e.g., students, educators, community members, families, etc.).
- Prepare a short “elevator speech” that highlights students served and key indicators of impact to share verbally or in writing with stakeholders.
- Present findings at conferences and other meetings where individuals and groups that are invested in children’s mental health and education are in attendance.
- Develop a social marketing campaign; this may include creating published (e.g., fliers) or online (e.g., website) access to your evaluation findings.
- Use diverse news media outlets in multiple languages to disseminate information about your services, supports, and impact. For example:
  - Write press releases for newspapers, relevant magazines, online news sources.
  - Create public service announcements on radio or local TV.
- Use social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter accounts) and columns/blurbs in the school or district newsletter to communicate the impact of your work.
- Create a website and/or ask the school or district to include information about comprehensive school mental health system services and findings on the school or district website.



## Example from the Field

One large midwestern school district-community partnership developed a data system for community-partnered mental health clinicians to submit *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires* for all students served in Tier 2 and 3 services every three to six months. After several years, they now have a large dataset to monitor trends in student outcomes and the relationship between mental health and academic outcomes, and to communicate findings to education partners and other stakeholders. The team has also successfully used the data to demonstrate the positive impact of mental health services on student outcomes and to leverage findings to secure additional state funding.





**Tip** Report impact results in a format that is easy to understand and accessible to a wide array of stakeholders (e.g., district administrators, funders, caregivers, teachers, students, etc.).

- Use large font, numbers, and brief segments of texts.
- Consider incorporating graphs, infographics, and charts.



## Examples from the Field

Reporting Impact Using Communications Tools:

- **Nevada State and Community Partnerships Creating Safe and Healthy Schools.** All Safe Schools/Healthy Students state grantees were provided a template that included design features and recommended sections to document and share impact.
- **Innovation that Works** is an infographic which shows the impact of the entire Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative nationwide, featuring state grantees. It could be easily adapted to any multi-site effort to support student mental health and well-being.
- **PAX Program Fact Sheet** uses infographics to describe a classroom-based positive behavior intervention, including a description of students served and educational and behavioral outcomes of the intervention across several school districts in a state.





For more resources,  
visit the **SHAPE Resource Library** at  
[www.theSHAPEsystem.com](http://www.theSHAPEsystem.com)



# School Mental Health Quality Guide *At A Glance:* Impact



- 1 Document impact of Tier 2 and 3 services and supports**
- 2 Document impact on educational outcomes**
- 3 Document impact on social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes**
- 4 Disaggregate student mental health service and support data to examine student outcomes based on sub-population characteristics**
- 5 Report the impact to a broad and diverse group of stakeholders**



## Best Practices

- **Consider how many unduplicated students were identified through a screening or referral process to possibly receive Tier 2 or 3 services and supports, have received at least one Tier 2 or 3 school mental health service, and have documented improvement** in social, emotional, behavioral, or educational functioning.
- **Develop theories of change** about how specific mental health services or supports impact educational outcomes, as well as social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for students across all identities and backgrounds.
- **Identify educational, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes to track**, and develop a plan to collect and document these outcomes.
- **Establish data infrastructure that allows for easy collection, evaluation, and reporting.**
- **Analyze educational, social, emotional, and behavioral data** to understand student progress and service impact.
- **Disaggregate data based on key demographics** to identify disparities in impact.
- **Develop a plan for documenting impact with student and family input**, ensuring representation of diverse identities and cultural backgrounds.
- **Incorporate qualitative feedback from diverse individuals** about the impact of school mental health services and supports on educational success, as well as social, emotional, and behavioral functioning.
- **Review current student data for variables that capture demographic characteristics relevant to your student body** and add any necessary variables that are not represented.
- **Examine key student outcomes for all students and compare those results to outcomes for students based on demographic characteristics of interest.**
- Use data to develop trauma-informed and healing-centered strategies to **address disparities in mental health access or outcomes.**
- **Develop quarterly or semi-annual reports and newsletters, or host meetings to share your data** with contributors and key stakeholders.
- **Prepare a compelling and clear 1-2 page document that communicates your impact.**
- **Prepare a short “elevator speech”** that highlights students served and key indicators of impact.
- **Present findings at conferences and other meetings** where attendees are invested in children’s mental health and education.
- **Develop a social marketing campaign** and use multilingual media outlets to disseminate information about your services, supports, and impact.

# School Mental Health Quality Guide *At A Glance:* Impact



## Action Steps

- Work with your team to **define Tier 2 and 3 services and supports, clarify how students are identified, utilize an efficient tracking system, and decide who is reporting, on what, and when.**
- **Consider characteristics** (e.g., gender, race, severity of mental health needs, etc.) **and potential outcomes** (e.g., goal achievement, sense of school connectedness and safety, disciplinary incidents, etc.) **to examine.**
- **Track disaggregated data** to determine patterns over time.
- **Partner with students, families, and community members** to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies **to address disparities** in student access to services and/or outcomes.



## Tips

- **Select educational, social, emotional, and behavioral data that are: likely to be affected** by school mental health services and supports; **readily available** or can be reasonably collected; **most useful** to groups who use, fund, or are impacted by the services and supports; **shareable** within and beyond the school team.
- **Develop and use a theory of change** to help school and district teams map short and long-term outcomes.
- **Report results in a format that is easily accessible** to a wide array of stakeholders.



## Examples from the Field

- **A rural school district in Kansas used PowerSchool** to track data and document the impact of Tier 2 & 3 services and supports on educational, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes.
- **The Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut uses the EBP Tracker** to collect data on evidence-based interventions being delivered in schools and other community settings, which are shown to improve outcomes and reduce racial disparities compared to usual care.
- **A large midwestern school district-community partnership developed a data system** to demonstrate the positive impact of mental health services on student outcomes and to secure state funding.
- **Nevada State and Community Partnerships Creating Safe and Healthy Schools** highlights the findings and impact of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant.
- **Innovation that Works** graphically depicts the impact of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative nationwide.
- **Pax Program Fact Sheet** illustrates a classroom-based positive behavior intervention.



## Resources

- [The NCSMH Student Information Systems Brief](#)
- [Implementing a Comprehensive School Mental Health Program](#)
- [Developing a Theory of Change: Practical Theory of Change Guidance, Templates, and Examples](#)
- [Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Disaggregated Data on Racial/Ethnic Subgroups](#)
- [The Blueprint for Using Data to Reduce Disparities/Disproportionalities in Human Services and Behavioral Health Care](#)