



SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH TEAMING PLAYBOOK

Best Practices and Tips from the Field



Center for School Mental Health

Background

What is a school mental health team?

A school mental health team is a group of school and community stakeholders that meet regularly and use data-based decision making to support student mental health, including improving school climate, promoting student and staff well-being, and addressing individual student strengths and needs.

Many schools have teams that meet to discuss and strategize about student mental health issues. Schools may have one team devoted to the full continuum of mental health supports (mental health promotion to selective and indicated intervention) or multiple teams that address different parts of the continuum.

Example teams

- School climate team
- Student Support Team (SST)
- Mental health promotion/universal team
- Tier 2/3; Intervention/tertiary care team

Effective teaming requires schools and community partners, including families, to be committed to advancing a multi-tiered systemic approach that addresses the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students.

The School Mental Health Quality Assessment Survey includes five performance indicators on Teaming:

- 1.** A multidisciplinary school mental health team
- 2.** Streamlined teams that avoid duplication and promote efficiency
- 3.** A productive meeting structure
- 4.** A system in place to promote data sharing among team members
- 5.** Well-established working relationships with community mental health resources to refer students and families to when their needs cannot be met in school

Importance of Teaming

Well-functioning school mental health teams facilitate the maximum impact of a comprehensive school mental health system (CSMHS). They serve as the organizing structure for a multi-tiered system of school mental health supports and services (MTSS). High functioning teams capitalize on the multi-disciplinary resources within a school and community to achieve the greatest outcomes for students, families, and the school community.

Purpose of Teaming

- ✓ Organize a structure for a CSMHS
- ✓ Coordinate across programs, supports, and services within a school building/district/state
- ✓ Assess the strengths, needs, and interventions for students requiring different levels of support (universal mental health promotion, selective, and indicated intervention)
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness of services and supports within a MTSS

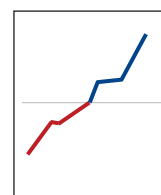
The Four Teaming Action Steps



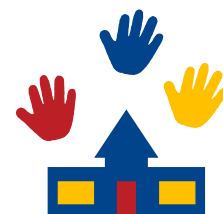
Establish appropriate teaming structures and membership



Implement efficient and productive meeting practices



Use and share data



Maintain working relationships with community providers

ACTION STEPS

Establish Appropriate Teaming Structures and Membership

Map existing school mental health teams

- Identify existing teams in your school building or district that focus in full or in part on mental health.

Document the purpose and targeted outcomes of each team

- Consider the goals of each team and the data used to determine success.

Streamline teams

- Be efficient in the number of teams addressing mental health concerns. Some schools prefer to have one universal team and a combined Tier 2/3 team, and others may have one team address all tiers.
- For each team, determine the purpose, target goals, activities, and processes of the team.
- Communicate across teams to ensure purposes are complimentary, not duplicative, and modify focus if needed to address full continuum of mental health concerns.
- Instead of creating new teams, build upon an existing team when possible. Consider recruiting new members or restructure as a subcommittee of an existing team.
- Ensure representation of diverse school mental health stakeholders, representing an array of disciplines and perspectives.

Tips from the Field

INCLUDE YOUTH AND FAMILIES



Our district created a youth and family advisory committee. This committee has regular contact with our student support services team and their partnership is essential to meet the needs of our school community and ensure school mental health initiatives are successfully implemented.



Clarify team members' roles and responsibilities

- Consider team member responsibilities across a multi-tiered system of student support.
 - For each professional, list their responsibilities including primary and secondary roles.
 - Map the roles and responsibilities of team members within a school building/district to clarify distinctions between roles and that all responsibilities are assigned and complementary.



[Click here to access a customizable SMH Roles and Responsibilities Template.](#)

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: Minneapolis Public Schools School Mental Health Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

This tool was developed by Minneapolis Public School (MPS) District to provide clarification on the MPS approach to student mental health, including the specific roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in supporting student mental health. This resource can be found at TheSHAPESystem.com within the Quality Assessment Resource Library (Teaming section).

WHO MIGHT BE ON OUR SMH TEAM?

At the school level:

- Administrator(s)
- Student support staff (e.g., school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse, counselor)
- Community mental health provider(s) (school-based and school-linked providers)
- Student(s)
- Family member(s)
- Teacher(s)

At the district level:

- Administrator representative(s)
- Director of Student Support Services
- Director of Community-Partnered Services
- School Health Leadership
- Community Mental Health Provider Leadership
- Child-serving system representatives
- Student organization representatives
- Family organization representatives
- Education leadership
- Educators
- Community mental health direct service providers
- Youth and family consumers of school services

Implement efficient and productive meeting practices

Appoint a school mental health team leader

- This person should possess excellent group facilitation skills (e.g., keeping participants on task and feeling valued); excellent listening skills (e.g., refrain from imposing his or her own opinions); and be respected by all participants.

Establish a regularly scheduled time and frequency for meetings

- Agree to hold each other accountable for regular attendance and active participation.
- When team members are not regularly in one location, CSMHSs have found success holding virtual meetings via phone or by using screensharing technology (e.g., Go To meeting, Adobe Connect).

Utilize best practices for team meetings

- ✓ Identify a skilled meeting facilitator
- ✓ Start and end on time
- ✓ Use an agenda
- ✓ Designate person to take and disseminate meeting notes
- ✓ Disseminate meeting notes with actionable steps within 24 hours
- ✓ Follow up on action items at the beginning of each meeting



[Click here to access a customizable SMH team meeting agenda.](#)

Use exemplar teams to inform teaming quality improvement strategies

- Find school teams that are working well (e.g. utilizing meeting best practices and achieving targeted goals and outcomes) and use what you learn about these exemplar teams to inform quality improvement strategies for school mental health teams.

Use and share data

Identify data collection sources and processes to track and review progress

- Ensure target goals are clear and measurable (e.g., improve school climate by 20% this academic year; reduce exclusionary discipline practices by 50% this month; [student] will attend school 90% of days).
- Outline data collection options and decide how often the team will query and review data.

Identify and address potential barriers to data sharing

- Identify privacy laws and regulations in education and health care field related to data sharing such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) issues.
- Address potential barriers to data sharing that may be present and identify strategies to address them (e.g., secure consents and releases of information to allow data sharing across system partners).
- **Neither HIPAA nor FERPA should be seen as an insurmountable obstacle for your program.**
 - Be clear about what information can and cannot be shared with whom.
 - Discuss standard and any unique privacy considerations with parents/guardians.
 - Be sure that parents/guardians understand and sign a release-of-information form.
 - Create a policy and have memorandums of understanding readily available for how your district will share information and documents with your community mental health partner(s).



[Click here for an example parent/guardian release of information consent form.](#)

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: Baltimore City Schools Roles and Functions Matrix

This guide was developed to specifically outline the roles and functions of cross-disciplinary Student Support Team (SST) members. This resource can be found at TheSHAPESystem.com within the Quality Assessment Resource Library (Teaming section).



[Click here to access a customizable SMH team roles and functions template.](#)

Tips from the Field

DON'T LET HIPAA/FERPA PREVENT COLLABORATION

“We always thought HIPAA and FERPA would keep us from working closely with our community mental health partners. Turns out, we just simply needed to get the proper consents and releases of information in place.”

Maintain Working Relationships with Community Providers

- Ensure your school mental health team membership includes community partners (school- and community-based).
- Seek, establish, and maintain positive working relationships with community organizations and resources that match the mental health and wellness needs of your students, their families and the broader school community.
- Determine policies and procedures to refer, connect, and coordinate services and supports with providers for students whose needs cannot be fully met in school.

Tips from the Field

USE MOUs THAT SUPPORT TEAMING



Our Director of Student Support Services encouraged the district to develop a consistent MOU with community mental health providers that specified the expectations, such as participating in school teams, the services and supports they would provide to augment school-employed staff services, AND how they would measure impact.”



ANATOMY OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Purpose of agreement

Explain what the MOU is for and any definitions of programs or services.

Fiscal and resource agreement

Detail payment exchanged, if applicable. Detail resources or other non-financial sources of support that will be exchanged (e.g., delivery of professional development). MOUs are very helpful for any kind of shared agreement, whether or not payment is exchanged.

Duration and termination

Outline how long the MOU is valid for and procedures for requesting termination by either party.

Memorandum of Understanding Between Appleville School District and Hope Child and Family Services

Purpose of agreement: The purpose of this agreement is to establish roles and responsibilities of the Parties to develop and implement a comprehensive school mental health system that utilizes the strengths and expertise of school and community-partnered professionals.

Roles and responsibilities of each party: The Parties agree to the following roles and responsibilities.

- a. Responsibilities of Hope Child and Family Services (HCFS)
 - i. Actively participate in school mental health team(s)...
 - ii. Provide mental health services, to include...
- b. Responsibilities of Appleville School District
 - i. Identify school(s) that demonstrate readiness...
 - ii. Provide confidential space in school(s) that includes...
 - iii. Facilitate inclusion and active participation of community partners...
 - iv. Create data-based decision models and referral processes that promote...

Fiscal and resource agreement

- a. Appleville School District will pay HCFS the total sum of XX...
- b. Payments will be made in a...

Liability release as an independent contractor

- a. In providing services to Appleville School District students, HCFS shall at all times operate as an independent contractor and shall have no authority to make any arrangements or incur any liabilities on behalf of the Board.

Duration and termination

- a. This Agreement is for the period beginning Month/Day/Year to Month/Day/Year...

Insurance and indemnification

- a. [Program Name Here] shall purchase and maintain during the term of any resulting agreement...

Roles and responsibilities of each party

Outline what activities the school district and community partners are expected to participate in. Examples include prevention, promotion, and intervention services, attendance at team meetings, training or professional development provided and/or attended, space and resources for activities and collaboration, data reporting and use guidelines, and guidelines related to student and family confidentiality.

Liability release as an independent contractor

Detail limits to liability for both/either parties here.

Insurance and indemnification

List the types of insurance that the community provider will purchase and maintain, including general liability, professional liability, and worker's compensation, as applicable.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: Example Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This document provides a full template MOU between a school district and community mental health provider that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party. This resource can be found at TheSHAPESystem.com within the Quality Assessment Resource Library (Teaming section).

Resources

Online Training Videos and Webinars

- Center for School Mental Health (2015) Module 6: Teaming. Community-Partnered-School Mental Health Implementation Modules. <https://mdbehavioralhealth.com/training>. This module reviews how to assemble a school mental health team and best practices for engaging partners and operating school mental health teams. The role of community, school, and family and youth partners is considered in detail.
- For more information on the intersection between HIPAA and FERPA, visit: http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/faq/ferpa_and_hipaa/index.html

Customizable Templates

- ★ [School Mental Health Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- ★ [School Mental Health Team Meeting Agenda](#)
- ★ [School Mental Health Team Roles and Functions Template](#)
- ★ [Parent/Guardian Release of Information Consent Form](#)

Articles and Guides

- Appendix E: Implementation guide: District and community leadership teams. In S. Barrett, L. Eber & M. Weist (Eds.), *Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Behavior Support* (pp.140-141). <https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>
- *Leading by Convening – A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement* provides a guide toward developing authentic stakeholder engagement. <https://www.nasdse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=uyli21KRYB4%3D&tabid=36>
- Mellin, E. A., Taylor, L., & Weist, M. D. (2014). The expanded school mental health collaboration instrument [school version]: Development and initial psychometrics. *School Mental Health*, 6(3), 151-162.

This Playbook is one of a series created by the national Center for School Mental Health (CSMH) as a part of the National Quality Initiative, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration. The CSMH is grateful for the support of the 25 school districts who participated in the School Health Services Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN) and contributed to the development of this guide.