Implementing Evidence-based Student Mental Health Supports in Tennessee Schools

Sara Smith | TN AWARE Director | Office of Student Support | Sept. 21, 2018
Addressing the Elephant in the Room at School
School District Readiness
50% of schools districts indicated preventative mental/behavioral care was available in all schools.

84% of school districts indicated they strongly agree (44%) or agree (40%) that they would be interested in more support from external partners, including the department, for student mental health.

60% of school districts said they had implemented school-based mental health services through a community agency within the last three years.

48% of all school districts indicated social-emotional health was one of their top student health priorities.
Why school mental health supports and services?

- Mental health problems are common. One in five of our youth experience mental health issues. Mental health disorders are the most common diseases in childhood.

- Mental health problems often develop during adolescence. One half of all mental illness begins by age 14.

- 79% of those affected will not seek help. Why do you think this is?

Source: National Council of Behavioral Health
Why school mental health supports and services?

- Youth and young adults may experience mental health problems differently than adults.

- Youth may not be well informed about mental health. Mental health stigma prevents many students from seeking help.

Source: National Council of Behavioral Health
Why school mental health supports and services?

- The sooner an individual gets help, the more likely they are to have a positive outcome.

- Among students with disabling conditions, young people with mental illness are the most likely to drop out of school.

- Only one third of young people with mental illness advance to postsecondary education.

Source: National Council of Behavioral Health
Why school mental health supports and services?

- More than **60%** of children in juvenile detention have a diagnosable mental illness.

- Misunderstanding and discrimination are **often** associated with mental health problems.

- Professional help is **not always** on hand.

Source: National Council of Behavioral Health
Tennessee AWARE Grant

- Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education
- Five-year SAMHSA Grant (2014-19)
- Anderson, Lauderdale, and Lawrence County School Districts
Tennessee AWARE Program Goals

#1
Infrastructure development at the state and local levels.

#2
Increase adult mental health literacy and competency to detect and appropriately respond to student mental health needs (e.g., Youth Mental Health First Aid Training).

#3
Expand MTSS behavioral supports and mental health services for school-age youth.
Goal 1: Infrastructure Development...It Takes A Team
Goal 1: Infrastructure Development

- AWARE State Management team, LEA Management teams, Tennessee School Mental Health Collaborative, Student LEA Mental Health Advisory Committees
- MTSS and School Mental Health Integration
- New School Safety and School Mental Health Integration
- Integrate into School Counseling Framework
- Support School Social Workers
Goal 2: Adult Mental Health Literacy Promotion
Goal 2: Adult Mental Health Literacy Promotion—YMHFA

- Introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents
- Builds understanding of the importance of early intervention
- Teaches individuals how to help an adolescent in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge
- The course is designed for adults who regularly interact with adolescents (e.g., teachers, school staff, coaches, youth group leaders, parents, etc.)

*Mental Health First Aid does not teach people to diagnose or to provide treatment.*
Goal 2: Adult Mental Health Literacy Promotion—YMHFA

85 YMHFA instructors have received training statewide.

YMHFA instructors have trained 4,244 “first aiders” from Aug. 2015–Sept. 1, 2018.

First aiders have connected 13,503 youth in Tennessee to resources and/or services.
Goal 3: School Mental Health Services Expansion
Goal 3: School Mental Health Services Expansion

The three AWARE LEAs implemented a multi-tiered system of supports framework to provide comprehensive mental health supports and services in their school districts. This was done in partnership with a local management team and a community-based mental health provider after an extensive planning process.
School district mental health policy and crisis planning
Establish process for early identification and mental health referrals
Student leadership opportunities
Trauma-informed practices
Restorative practices
Social and Personal Competence (SPC)
Health and wellness (including mental health) education

Approach:

**Tier I** All 80-85%
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Define
- Evaluate
- Analyze
- Implement
- Data-Based Decision Making

**Tier II** Some 10-15%
- Mental health interventions and progress monitoring
- Check-in Check-out
- Effective individual and small group counseling

**Tier III** Few 3-5%
- Community-based mental health services
- Transition and re-entry planning
- School based mental health
- Consultation/therapy/wraparound services

Guiding Principles:
- Leadership
- Culture of Collaboration
- Prevention & Early Intervention

Increasing Supports for Students
Examples of Tier I Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

- Department School Climate Survey administration for teachers, parents and students
- Building Strong Brains—Strategies for Educators (ACEs – Trauma Informed Practices)
- Restorative Practices
- Adult Mental Health Literacy – YMHFA, QPR
Examples of Tier I Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

- District planning (e.g., PREPARE and emergency operations plan)
- Classroom circles/Morning meetings
- Suicide Prevention Training
  - QPR, The Jason Foundation, YMHFA
Examples of Tier I Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

- Student Awareness Initiatives
  - MH 101, Erasing the Stigma, Move 2 Stand, social media projects, public service announcements, billboards and school events, health classes

- District Guidelines and Policy
  - Establish clear mental health referral guidelines and pathway, suicide prevention, and school mental health policies
Examples of Tier I Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

Family Engagement

Family/School Events – Information Booths

Parent Orientation Nights – SMH Information Shared

Parents on AWARE Local Management Team

Parents on AWARE State Management Team

Foster Parent Support Groups

District Newsletters Sent to Parents
Examples of Tier II Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

- Early MH Identification and Progress Monitoring
  - Tennessee AWARE electronic referral pathway system, progress monitoring built into role expectations, student self-referral option

- Individual & Group Interventions
  - Why Try, Ripples Effects, Classroom Check-in/Check-out, school counselor small groups (e.g., grief, divorce, anger, eating disorders, etc.)

- School Discipline
  - Restorative Conferencing
Examples of Tier III Evidence-based Strategies for School Mental Health

- School-based therapists
- Community-based MH provider partnerships
- Individual student transition plans
  - safety, re-entry, changing schools, entry, and graduation
1,562* students have been served by mental health clinicians employed by community partners in the three AWARE LEAs on school campuses from 2015-16 thru 2017-18 school years.

488* students have been served by school employed social workers from 2015-16 thru 2017-18 school years.

* Preliminary data
Evidence-based Practices
Building Strong Brains Strategies for Educators

- **Building Strong Brains: Strategies for Educators** is a free training provided by the department’s office of student support, designed to empower school leaders and teachers to address chronic childhood trauma (ACES) in the school and classroom.

- The department trained **27** instructors who provided professional development to over **5,000** school employees since July 2017.

- The department has accepted applications from schools to become model trauma informed schools. The office of student support will provide support and training to the selected schools based on a competitive review process. The schools selected will be announced Sept. 26.
Building Strong Brains Trainings

- Types of stress and how stress interferes with healthy development
- Brain architecture and how experiences and interaction shape a brain
- Types of trauma
- Knowledge building on self-regulation and resilience
- Adverse childhood experiences study and implications
Building Strong Brains Trainings

- Trauma informed principles and practices for classrooms
- Reacting vs. responding to challenging behaviors in the classroom
- Case studies
  - Putting trauma informed principles into practice
- School employee wellness
  - Exploring needs of staff wellness and school climate
Restorative practices develops community and manages conflict and tensions by repairing harm and restoring relationships.

From Jan. 2017 to May 2018 the department trained:

1,294 school employees in *Introduction to Restorative Practices* and *Using Circles Effectively*  

224 school employees in *Restorative Conferencing*
Next Steps

- Finalize Tennessee Comprehensive School Mental Health Resource Guide and expand department website presence

- Provide regional and/or school district comprehensive school mental training and technical assistance

- Transition the School Mental Health Collaborative to serve as state infrastructure once AWARE grant ends
Next Steps

- Integrate school mental health framework within broader department MTSS, school safety, and school counseling frameworks

- Provide professional development statewide to school employees regarding YMHFA, Building Strong Brains Strategies for Educators (ACEs), Restorative Practices, PREPARE, emergency operations plans

- Provide support for school social workers
Questions?
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Districts and schools in Tennessee will exemplify excellence and equity such that all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark on their chosen path in life.