

Selecting the Right Interventions to Support Students' Mental Health Needs

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS



Assess...

- types of mental health challenges that students face
- stressors contributing to these challenges
- how different students manifest these challenges



Examine...

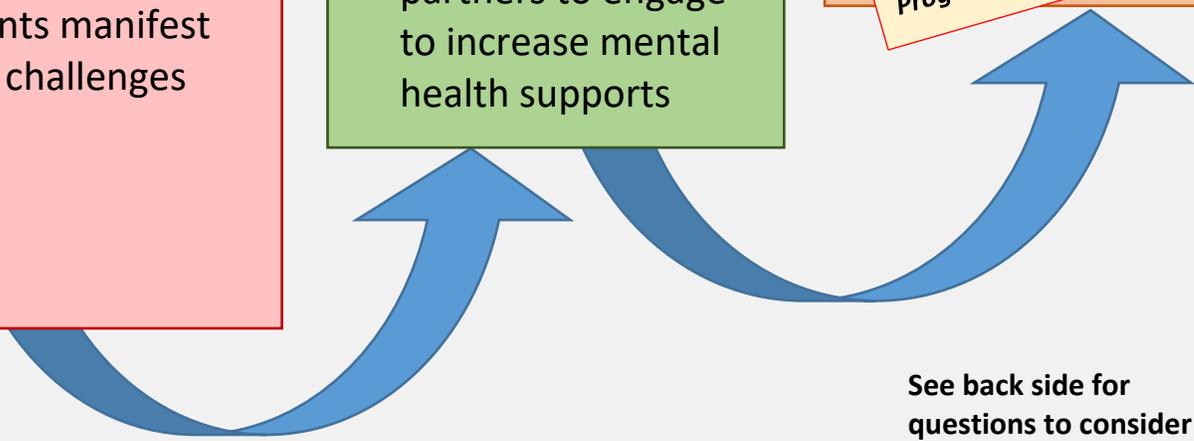
- current efforts to support students' mental health needs and mitigate stressors
- resources that can be leveraged to increase mental health supports
- which community partners to engage to increase mental health supports



Select...

- intervention(s) that address students' needs
- intervention(s) that can be implemented given current resources and capacities
- intervention(s) that are most likely to work

Refer to the Menu of Trauma Informed Programs



See back side for questions to consider for each step. 

Adapted from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2018). *Selecting best-fit programs and practices: Guidance for substance misuse prevention practitioners*. Retrieved from https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ebp_prevention_guidance_document_241.pdf

Digging Deeper

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS



Assess current needs

- What mental health challenges do our students face? How are we assessing and identifying these mental health needs?
- What stressors—in the home, school, and/or community—are contributing to these mental health challenges?
- How do different students manifest these mental health challenges at school? (e.g., problem behaviors, absenteeism, disengagement)



Examine current efforts and resources

- What types of interventions are we currently offering to address students' mental health needs and to mitigate stressors? What types of supports do these interventions provide?
 - Tier 1: School-wide and classroom-based supports for **all** students (e.g., social and emotional learning programs)?
 - Tier 2: Small group supports for **some** students (e.g., support group for students impacted by trauma)?
 - Tier 3: Individual supports for a **few** students (e.g., cognitive behavior therapy)?
- What types of financial and educational resources and staff capacities do we have that allow us to increase our mental health supports?
- Who can we engage in cross-agency collaboration to provide additional support to students?
- What community partners can we engage to increase our resources?



Select interventions that fit your needs & context

- From the *Menu of Trauma Informed Programs*, which program(s) address the mental health needs of our students? Which interventions are designed for students like ours (e.g., grade level) and complement the current supports we offer?
- Which of these interventions can we implement, given our existing resources and capacities (e.g., financial considerations)?
- Which interventions are most likely to work in our school—based on the rigor of their evaluation and the context of our school (e.g., cultural dynamics)?
- Which interventions are most likely to get the buy-in from the staff, parents, and the community?

Appendices

The appended documents contain additional resources on decision making and can be used in conjunction with the **Selecting the Right Interventions to Support Students' Mental Health Needs** resource to select appropriate evidence-based programs (EBPs) based on school, state, or district needs.

- 1. Broad Steps for Selecting Appropriate EBPs** (Appendix B of the [School Mental Health Decision Support Tool: Evidence-Based Mental Health Promotion Process](#))
 - Developed by School Mental Health-ASSIST
 - Checklist with key discussion questions and factors to consider when choosing appropriate EBPs
- 2. The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool** (Excerpted from [The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool](#))
 - Developed by The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 - Planning tool to guide selection and evaluate potential programs and practices for use, taking six contextual fit and feasibility factors into consideration

APPENDIX B: BROAD STEPS FOR SELECTING APPROPRIATE EBPs

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED/GAP AND DEVELOP GOALS	
What is the primary concern we would like to address?	
What are the contextual features of the problem (e.g., setting, conditions, context)?	
What are our goals for the intervention?	
STEP 2: SEARCH THE SUGGESTED DATA BASES PROVIDED - AND GENERATE A LIST (APPENDIX C)	
Do the goals of the program match our identified needs/gaps?	
Is our setting similar to those who have previously benefitted from the program?	
Does the age, grade, gender, ethnicity, etc. of the students that the program was intended for match those of our target group? If not, can it be adapted to meet the unique needs of our students or to make it more culturally sensitive without significantly affecting the integrity of the intervention/program?	
Has the program been shown in rigorous evaluations to produce meaningful results in school settings that are similar to context in which it will be implemented?	
What is the Level of Evidence? (see Levels of Evidence pyramid)	
Are there adequate resources available to:	
a) Purchase materials initially	
b) Purchase materials ongoing	
c) Support professional development initially	
d) Support professional development ongoing (with coaching)	
e) Fund potential release time initially	
f) Fund potential release time ongoing	
c) Implement the program with fidelity, according to the proven protocol?	
STEP 3: CONSIDER BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE LISTED PROGRAMS?	
What are the benefits and disadvantages of each program you are considering?	
Where do each of the programs fall in terms of both evidence and practicality?	
To what degree does each of the programs demonstrate characteristics of effectiveness? (i.e., comprehensive, varied teaching methods, sufficient dosage, theory driven, positive relationships, appropriately timed, socioculturally relevant, outcome evaluation)	
STEP 4: AS A TEAM, SELECT AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAM	
Has all the necessary information been collected?	
Have all the options been considered?	

The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool

The Hexagon can be used as a planning tool to guide selection and evaluate potential programs and practices for use.

IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATORS

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT

Staff meet minimum qualifications

Able to sustain staffing, coaching, training, data systems, performance assessment, and administration

- Financial capacity
- Structural capacity
- Cultural responsiveness capacity

Buy-in process operationalized

- Practitioners
- Families

FIT WITH CURRENT INITIATIVES

Alignment with community, regional, state priorities

Fit with family and community values, culture and history

Impact on other interventions & initiatives

Alignment with organizational structure

NEED

Target population identified

Disaggregated data indicating population needs

Parent & community perceptions of need

Addresses service or system gaps

PROGRAM INDICATORS

EVIDENCE

Strength of evidence—for whom in what conditions:

- Number of studies
- Population similarities
- Diverse cultural groups
- Efficacy or Effectiveness

Outcomes – Is it worth it?

Fidelity data

Cost – effectiveness data

USABILITY

Well-defined program

Mature sites to observe

Several replications

Adaptations for context

SUPPORTS

Expert Assistance

Staffing

Training

Coaching & Supervision

Racial equity impact assessment

Data Systems Technology Supports (IT)

Administration & System

