

# Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to Address Students' Mental Health: An Evidence-Based Approach

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Dr. Shai Fuxman  
Senior Research Scientist  
REL Northeast & Islands

Dr. Jessica J. Bailey  
Partnerships Lead  
REL Northeast & Islands

# REL Northeast & Islands

## AGENDA

- Introductions
- Mental Health in K-12 Schools
- Research Behind MTSS for Mental Health
- Selecting Evidence-Based MTSS Interventions
- Facilitated Q&A
- Wrap-up & Closing

# Goals for Today



Provide an overview of the  
Multi-Tiered System of  
Support (MTSS)  
framework



Describe processes for  
identifying and implementing  
evidence-based mental health  
supports through MTSS

# Introductions

# Who Are We?

**REL Northeast & Islands** is one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories.

We work in partnership with educators and policymakers to develop/use research that improves academic outcomes for students.

## What we do:

- Conduct research studies
- Disseminate research findings to those we serve
- Strategically engage with partners to use findings
- Design and deliver technical assistance focused on the use of data and research



# Presenters



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# Mental Health in K–12 Schools



# Introducing Sarah



# Why Focus on Mental Health Now?

- Prior to the pandemic mental health prevalence was increasing among US high school students.<sup>1</sup>
- Pandemic has added a significant layer of stress, fear, and possible trauma among students, parents, and educators.
- As more schools are measuring mental health and related behaviors, we are getting a better sense of severity and inequities in mental health.<sup>2</sup>
- Districts are receiving funding from federal and state sources to implement mental health supports.

# Worsening Youth Mental Health<sup>3</sup>

- More than 37% of high school students reported poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 44% reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless during the past year, compared to 37% in 2019 and 26% in 2009.
- 55% reported experiencing emotional abuse by a parent or other adult at home.
- Students who are LGBTQ, girls, or Hispanic reported higher rates of sadness/hopelessness and attempted suicide than their peers who are heterosexual, boys, or White and Black.

# Mental Health in K–12 Schools

Spring 2022 data of public schools from the NCES School Pulse Panel survey<sup>4</sup> found that...



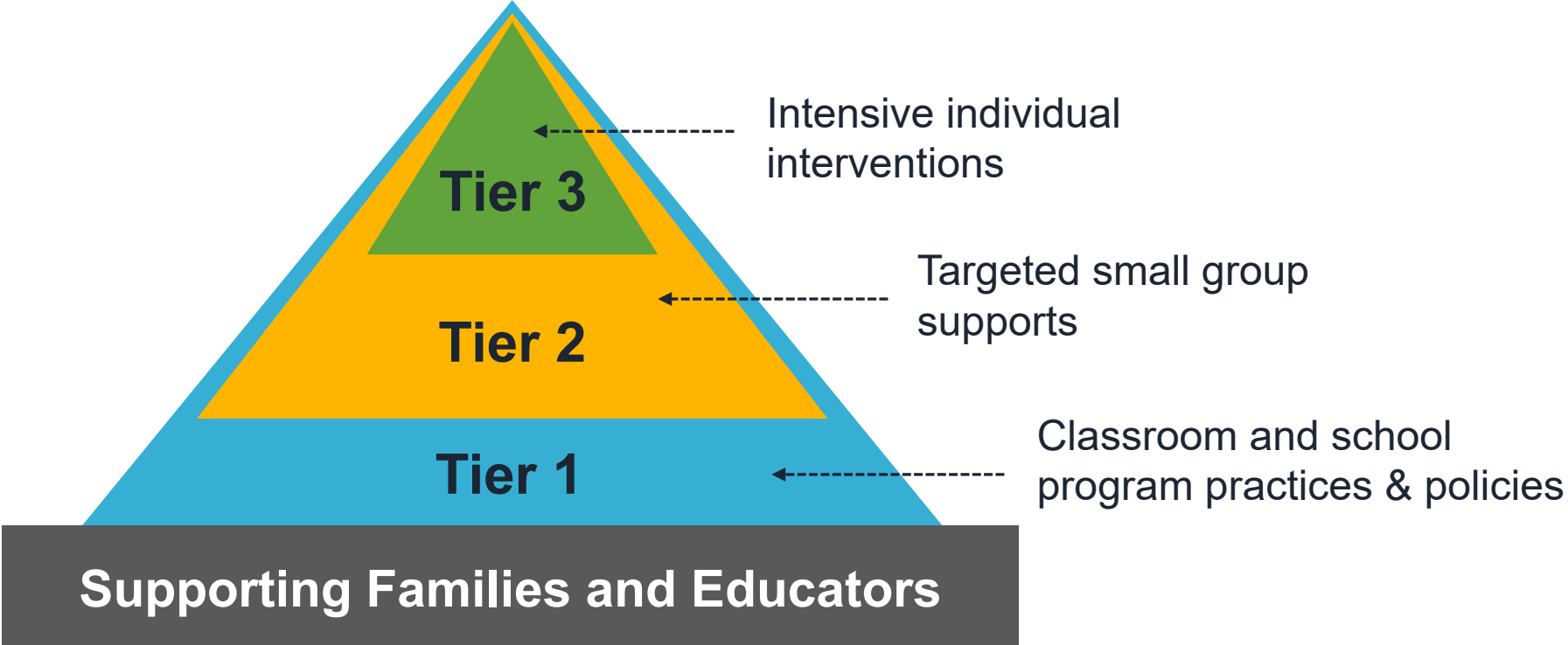
**More than 8 in 10 public schools** have seen stunted behavioral and socioemotional development in their students because of the COVID-19 pandemic



**70% of public schools** reported that the percentage of students who have sought mental health services increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

# Research Behind MTSS for Mental Health

# THE MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT APPROACH



Leadership

Data-Driven  
Decision-Making

Effective  
Implementation

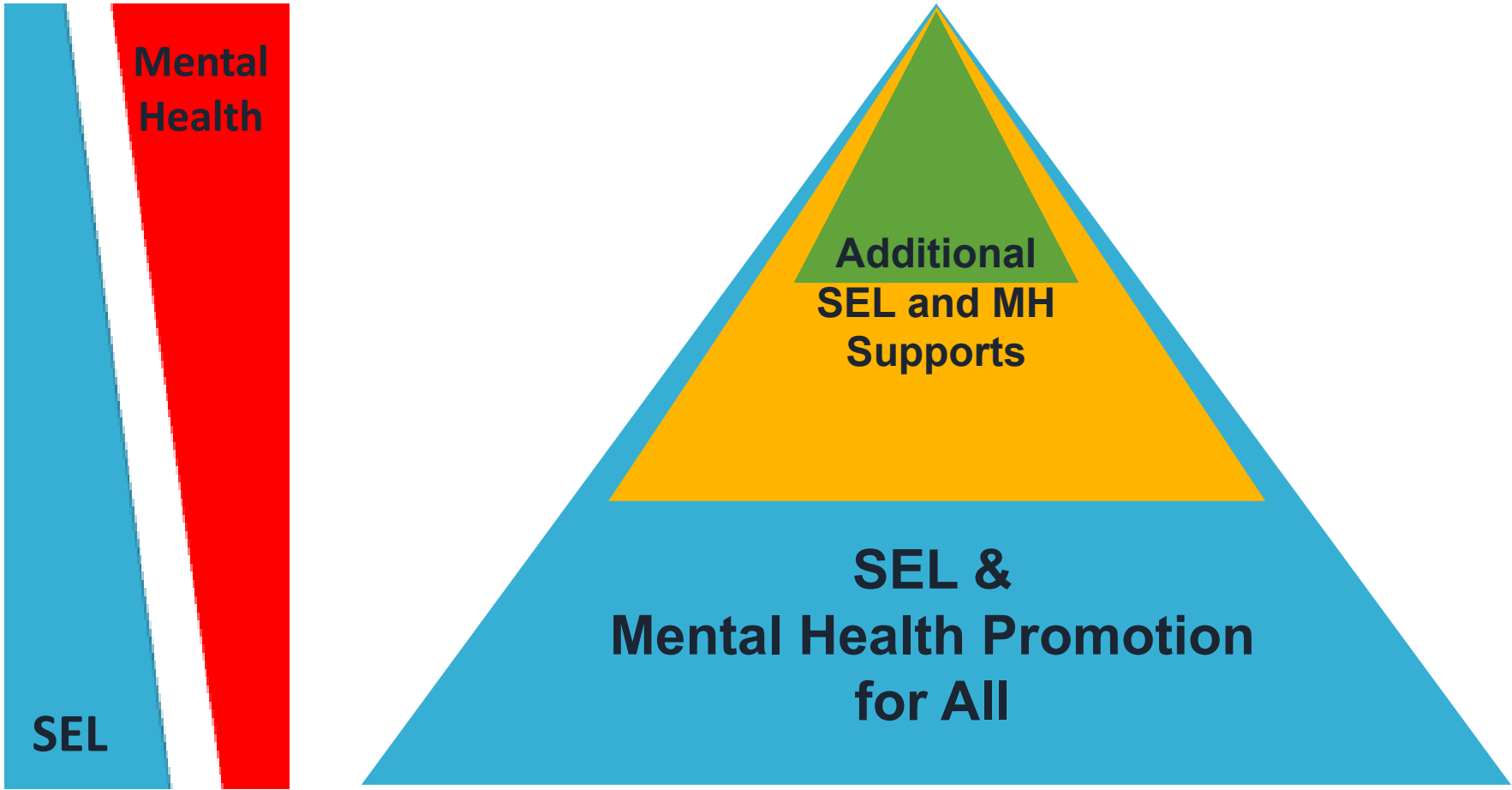
Focus on Equity

Communication &  
Coordination

**Drivers of Effectiveness**

# INCORPORATING SEL AND MENTAL HEALTH

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# RESEARCH BEHIND MTSS

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- Behavioral and academic benefits for the 15 percent of students initially identified as struggling the most with behavior.\*<sup>5</sup>
- Significantly improved social-emotional competencies and coping skills (particularly for students at highest risk); improved symptoms and functioning for students with mental health disorders.\*<sup>6</sup>
- Reduced depression and PTSD symptoms and increased self-perceived confidence among teachers and staff.‡<sup>7</sup>
- Decreased disruptive behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and office discipline referrals.\*\*<sup>8</sup>

\* = impact study; † = correlational study; ‡ = systematic review; \*\* = meta-analysis

# TIER 1

SEL programs and practices should be:

- Intentional
- Systemic
- Implemented consistently and well
- Vertically and horizontally aligned

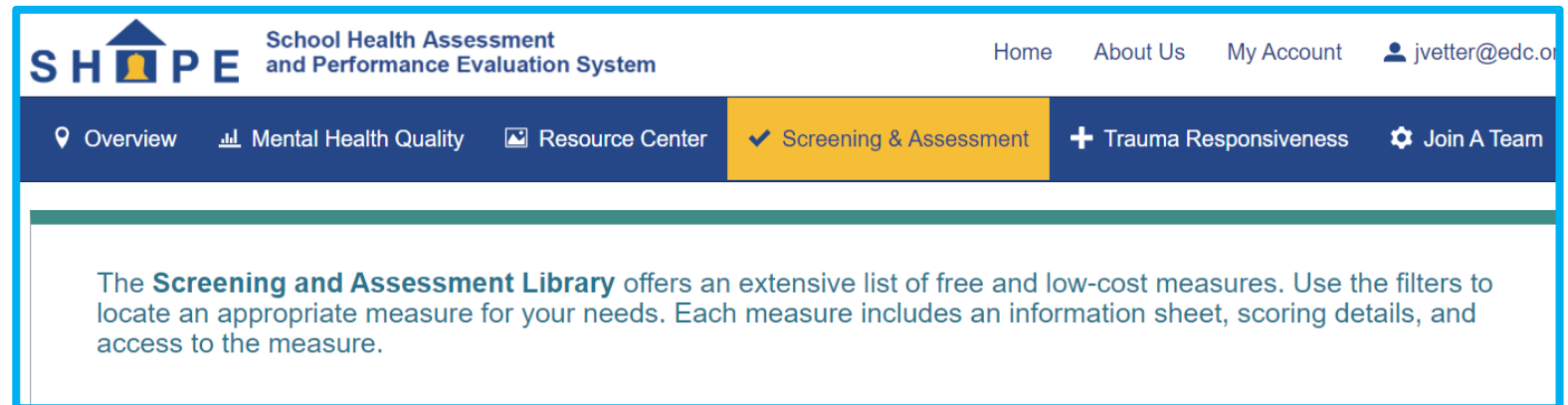


From: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2020). CASEL's SEL Framework. <https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/?view=true>



# IDENTIFYING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

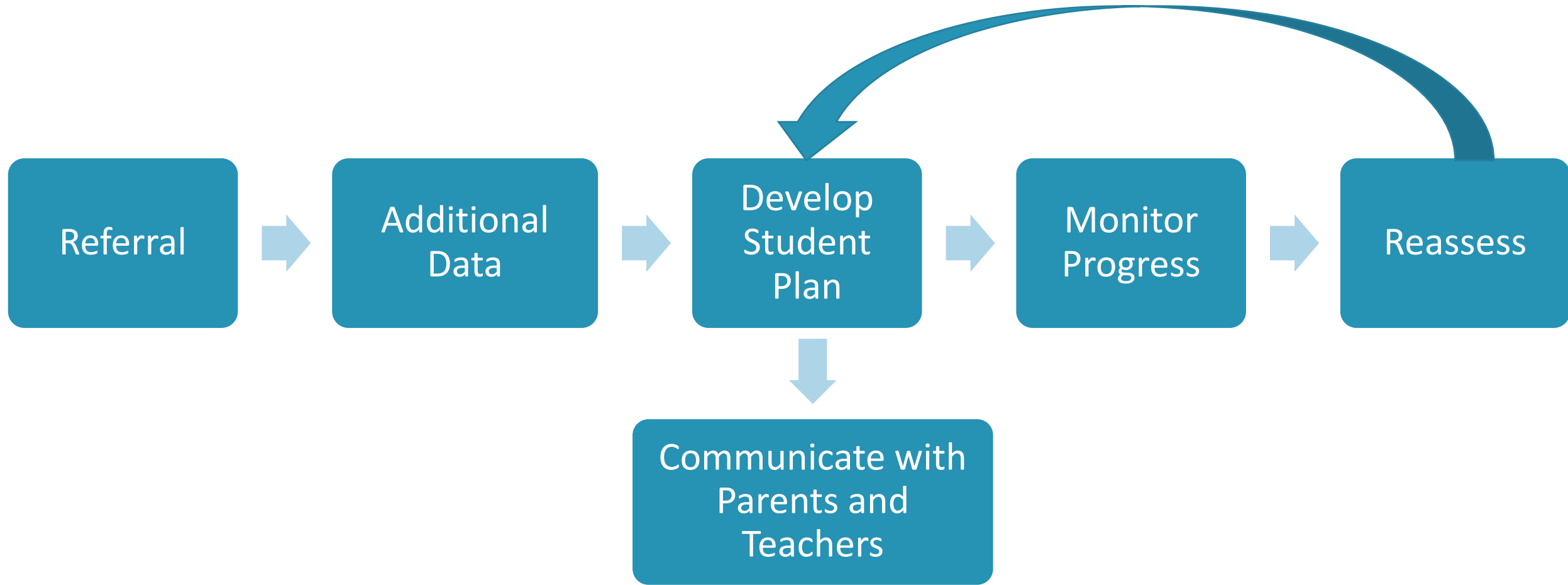
- All adults should know red flags and where to refer students
- Use mental health screeners to identify students who need additional support
- Make sure you are prepared to refer/support students who are identified
- Build collaboration with community-based mental health providers to increase capacity



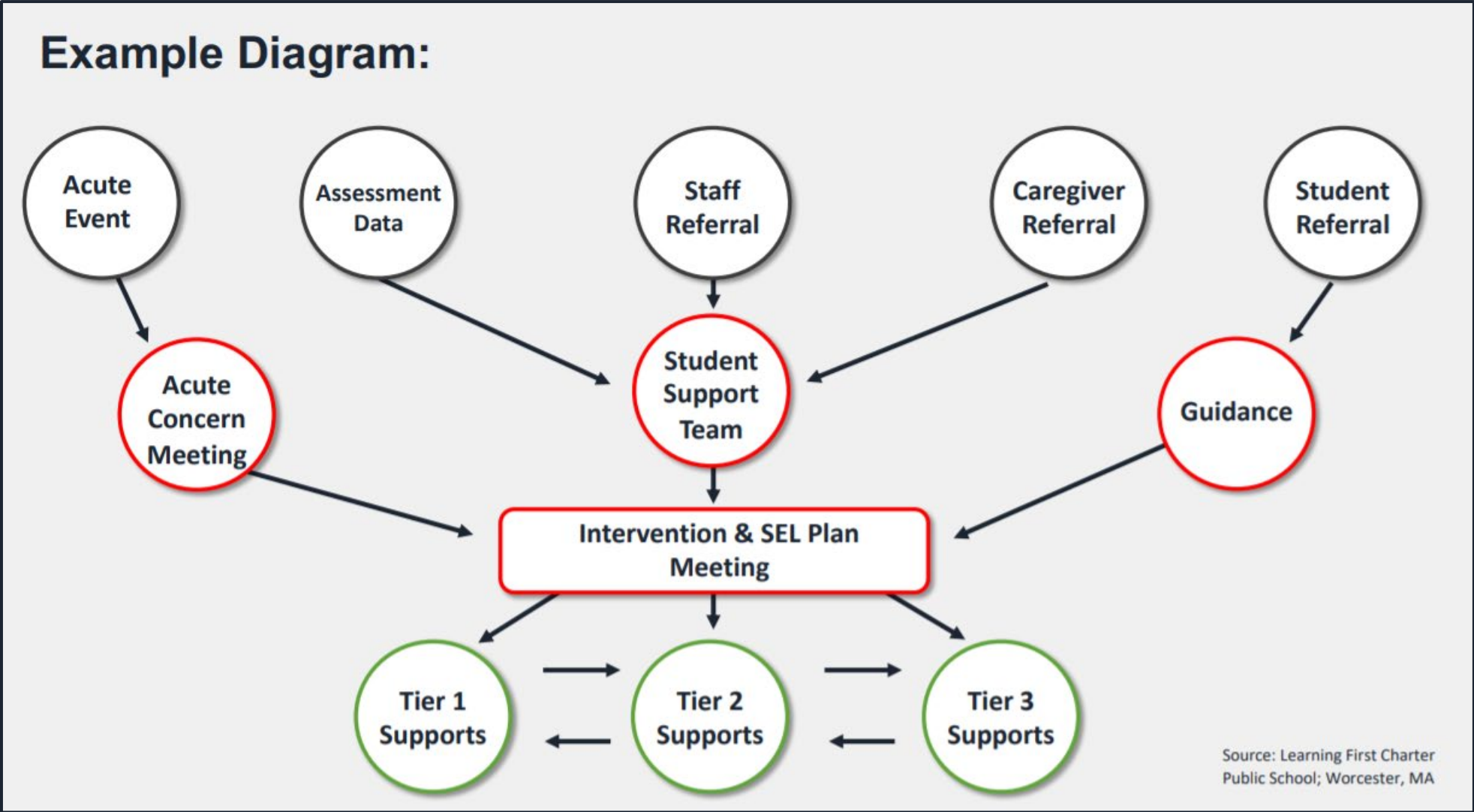
The screenshot displays the SHPE (School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System) website. The header includes the SHPE logo and the text 'School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System'. Navigation links for 'Home', 'About Us', 'My Account', and a user profile 'jvetter@edc.o' are visible. A dark blue navigation bar contains several menu items: 'Overview', 'Mental Health Quality', 'Resource Center', 'Screening & Assessment' (highlighted in yellow), 'Trauma Responsiveness', and 'Join A Team'. Below the navigation bar, a text box states: 'The **Screening and Assessment Library** offers an extensive list of free and low-cost measures. Use the filters to locate an appropriate measure for your needs. Each measure includes an information sheet, scoring details, and access to the measure.'

# STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM PROCESS

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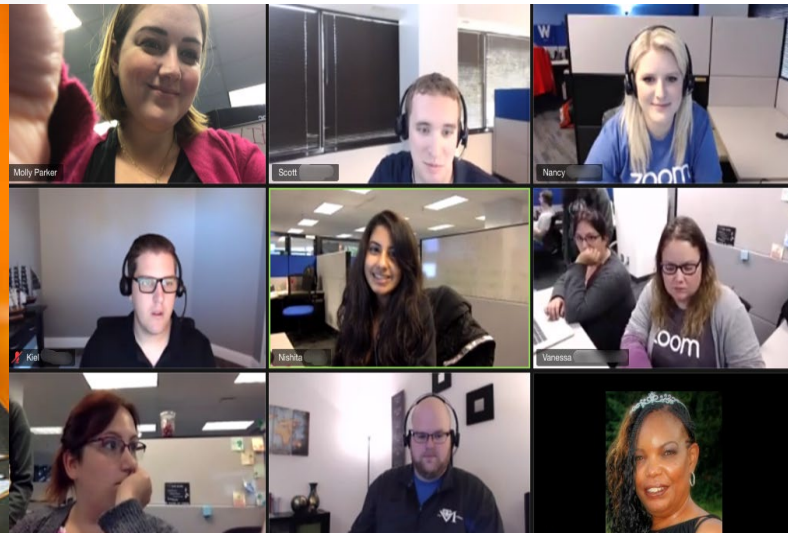


# IDENTIFYING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS



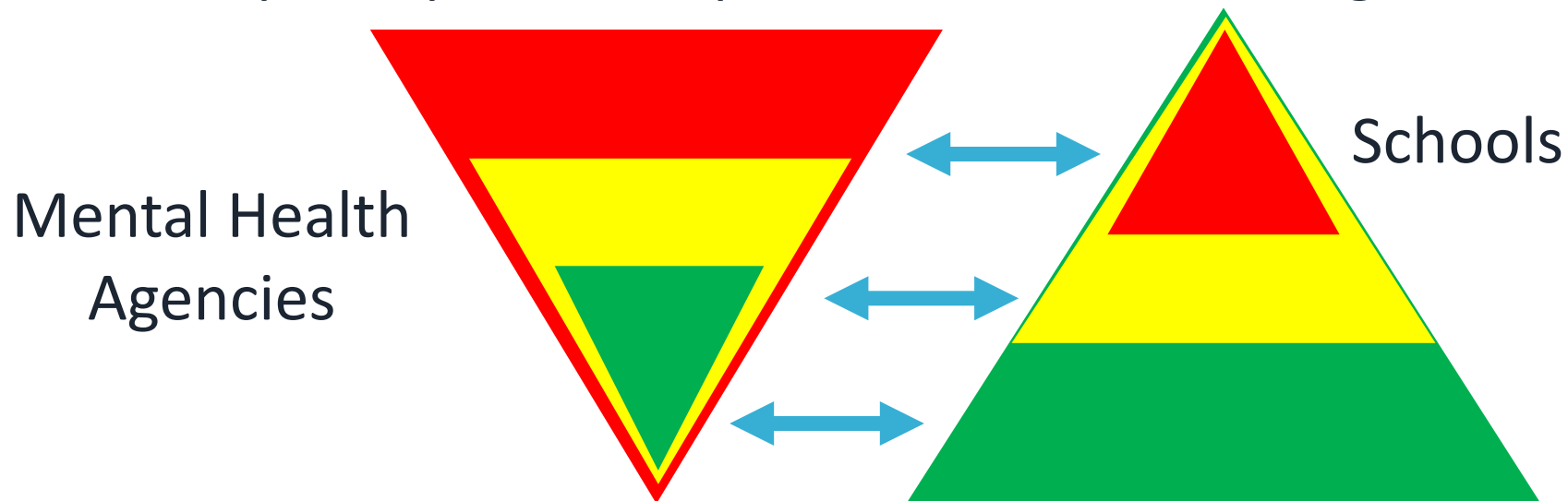
# TIER 2: SMALL GROUP SUPPORT

- Additional time to practice tier 1 activities for select students in small groups
- Group-based mental health support (e.g., art therapy groups)
- Mentoring
- Small group social skills
- Family engagement



# TIER 3: INDIVIDUALIZED INTERVENTIONS

- Provided to students with elevated mental health needs, including those diagnosed with mental health disorders
- Should include mental health screening to identify specific mental health challenges
- Often requires partnership with mental health agencies



Adapted from Hoover, S., Lever, N., Sachdev, N., Bravo, N., Schlitt, J., Acosta Price, O., Sheriff, L. & Cashman, J. (2019). *Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health: Guidance From the Field*. Baltimore, MD: National Center for School Mental Health. University of Maryland School of Medicine. [www.schoolmentalhealth.org/AdvancingCSMHS](http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/AdvancingCSMHS)

# PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

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- Establish referral process
- In-school mental health services provided by outside agencies
- ...or through Telehealth
- Participation of district representatives in community-based coalitions
- Ongoing professional development and coaching to school-based mental health staff



# MTSS Sample Plan

## Tier 1

Second Step Curriculum

Morning Meeting Routine

Integration of SEL into academic instruction

## Tier 2

Lunch Bunch

Check-in/Check-Out

Trauma Support Group

## Tier 3

Individualized sessions with School Adjustment Counselors

Partnership with MH agency

## Systems

Student Support Team

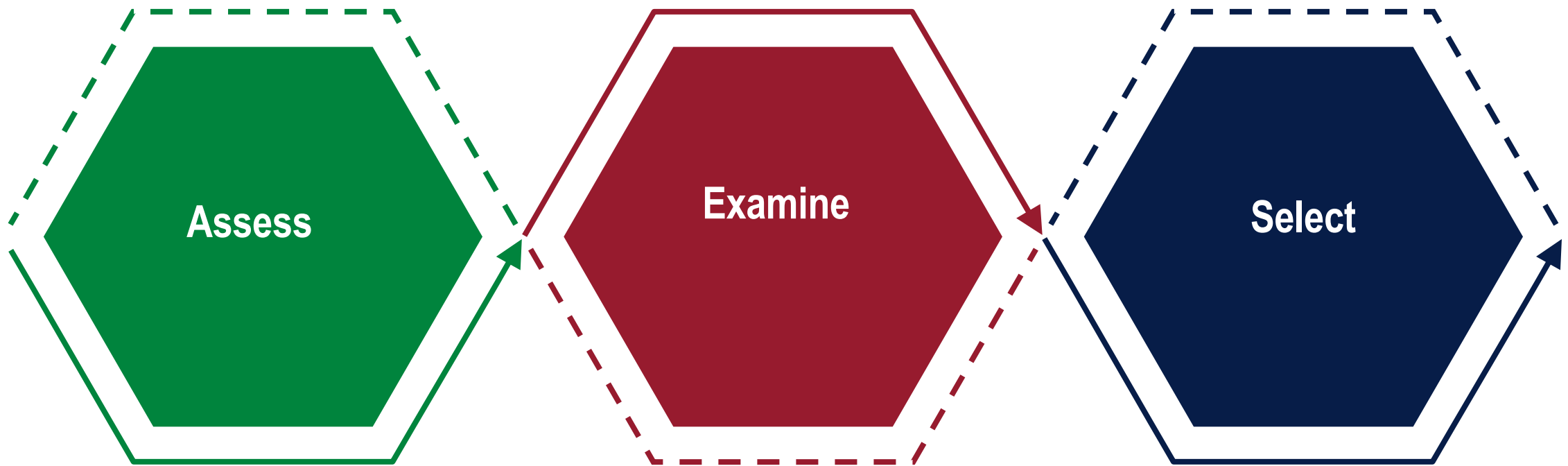
Universal Mental Health Screener

SEL/Mental Health Coordinating Team

# How to Select Evidence-Based Mental Health Interventions



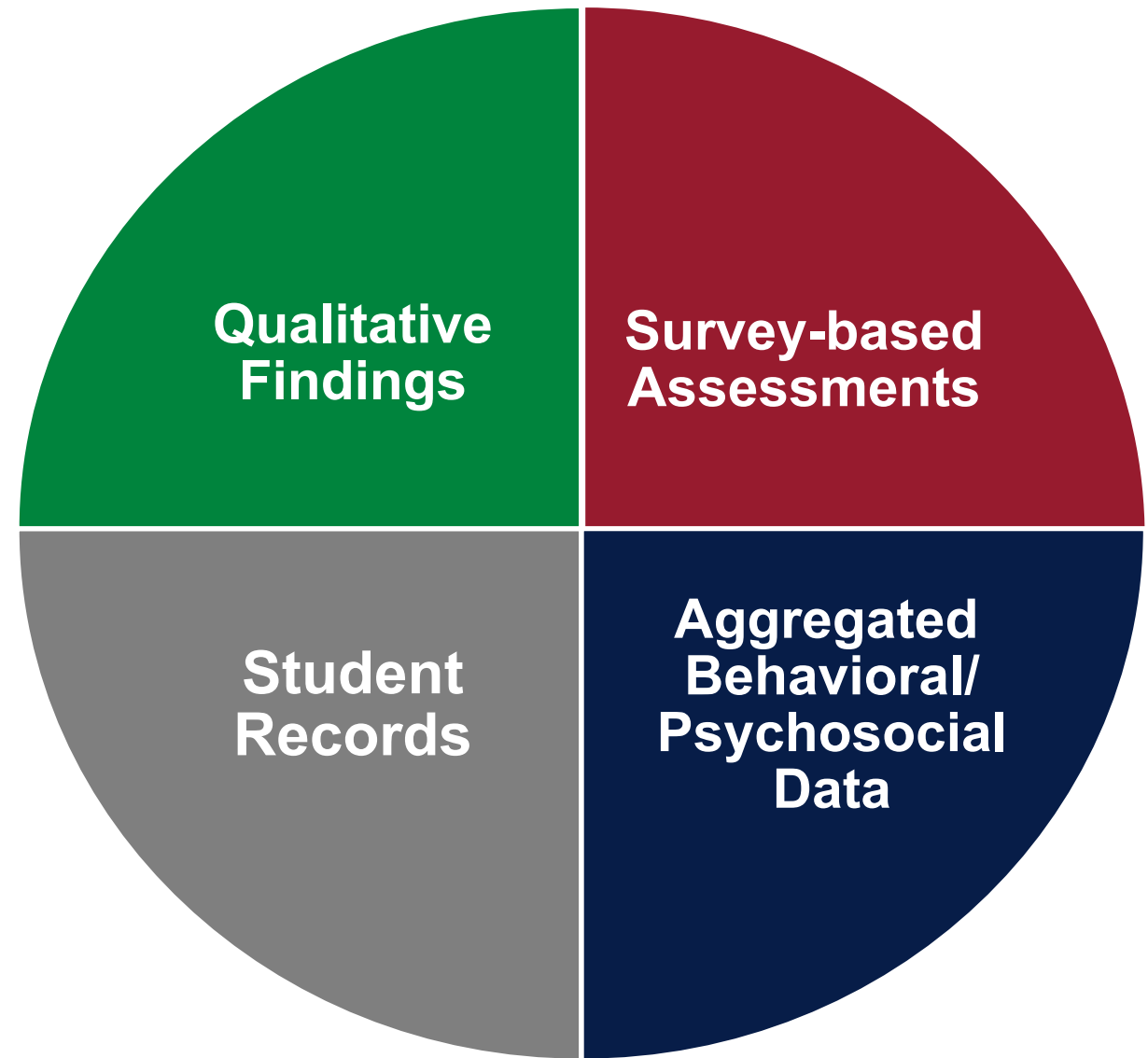
# REL Appalachia: Selecting the Right Interventions to Support Students' Mental Health Needs



REL Appalachia (2020). Selecting the right interventions to support students' mental health needs: Considerations when choosing school-based interventions [Event handout]. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/appalachia/events/materials/04-8-20-Handout1\\_selecting-right-interventions-to-support-students-mental-health-needs.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/appalachia/events/materials/04-8-20-Handout1_selecting-right-interventions-to-support-students-mental-health-needs.pdf)

# 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

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

# Where to Find Evidence-Based Interventions

- Menu of Trauma-Informed Programs for Schools ([REL Appalachia](#))
- Instructional Practices That Integrate Equity-Centered Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning ([American Institutes for Research](#))
- CASEL Program Guide [evidence-based SEL programs database] ([CASEL](#))
- What Works Clearinghouse ([Institute of Educational Sciences](#))
- Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center ([Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#))
- Blueprints-Certified Interventions ([Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#))
- Model Programs Guide ([Department of Justice](#))
- [SchoolSafety.gov](#)

# Tools to Help Examine and Select Interventions

- The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool ([National Implementation Research Network](#))
- School Mental Health Decision Support Tool: Evidence-Based Mental Health Promotion Process ([School Mental Health ASSIST](#))
  - Includes additional factors, elements, and special considerations to consider when exploring or selecting interventions
  - Includes appendices of checklists, templates, and tools that can help guide the process
- Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings [online module] ([National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion & Youth Violence Prevention](#))
- School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System ([SHAPE](#))
- Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools ([SAMHSA](#))



# Revisiting Sarah

# Questions?



# Wrap-up & Closing



# School Mental Health Community of Practice

- **Who:** State and district leaders overseeing mental health
- **What:** Participants will identify and share best practices for implementing and supporting multi-tiered systems of SEL and mental health services
- **When:** One-hour virtual meetings, beginning in fall 2022 through spring 2023. Approximately every other month.
- If you are interested in learning more, please enter your email in the chat.

# We Listen to You!

Your feedback is essential to our work.  
Please [take our survey](#) to help us improve.



# To Contact Today's Presenters

Dr. Shai Fuxman: [sfuxman@edc.org](mailto:sfuxman@edc.org)

Dr. Jessica Bailey: [jbailey@edc.org](mailto:jbailey@edc.org)

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/region/northeast>

# End Notes

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Data and statistics on children's mental health. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html> on July 12, 2022.
2. Rosen, M. L., Rodman, A. M., Kasperek, S. W., Mayes, M., Freeman, M. M., Lengua, L. J., ... & McLaughlin, K. A. (2021). Promoting youth mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study. *PloS one*, 16(8), e0255294.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, March 22). New CDC data illuminate youth mental health threats during the COVID-19 pandemic [press release]. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-19.html>
4. Institute of Education Sciences. (2022, July 6). 2022 School Pulse Panel. <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/>
5. Condliffe, B., Zhu, P., Doolittle, F., van Dok, M., Power, H., Denison, D., & Kurki, A. (2022). *Study of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior: Impacts on Elementary School Students' Outcomes* (NCEE 2022-008). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee>

## End Notes (continued)

6. Walter, H. J., Kaye, A. J., Dennery, K. M., & DeMaso, D. R. (2019). Three-year outcomes of a school-hospital partnership providing multitiered mental health services in urban schools. *Journal of school health, 89*(8), 643-652.
7. Berger, E. (2019). *Multi-tiered approaches to trauma-informed care in schools: A systematic review*. *School Mental Health, 1-15*.
8. Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). *A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents*. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 45*, 294–309.

# Additional Works Consulted

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- Rosen, M. L., Rodman, A. M., Kasparek, S. W., Mayes, M., Freeman, M. M., Lengua, L. J., ... & McLaughlin, K. A. (2021). Promoting youth mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study. *PloS one*, 16(8), e0255294.
- Zolopa, C., Burack, J. A., O'Connor, R. M., Corran, C., Lai, J., Bomfim, E., ... & Wendt, D. C. (2022). Changes in youth mental health, psychological wellbeing, and substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid review. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1–17.

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