



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION LITERACY IN SCHOOLS

LINKING TO A CONTINUUM OF WELL-BEING



Mental Health Facts

- Mental health is a critical part of overall health and *well-being* and is important throughout the life cycle; affecting thinking and learning, feelings and actions, influencing healthy decision making.
- According to the World Health Organization “there is no health without mental health” with health being a state of complete physical, mental and social *well-being*; not only absence of disease.
- Education on the importance of the mind-body connection, and the several dimensions of health including mental health and the relation of physical and mental health, will enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, *well-being* and human dignity.

Mental Health Facts

- “In childhood and throughout adolescence, mental health means attaining developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills and coping with challenging situations. Mentally healthy children/youth have a positive quality of life and function well at home, in school, and in their communities”
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “focusing on establishing healthy behaviors during childhood is more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood.”

New York State Education Department (NYSED) Amendments to Commissioner's Regulation (CR) Health Education Part 135

As outlined in the May 2018 NYSED's Board of Regents Memo; Education Law §804 was amended by Chapter 390 (Laws 2016) and Chapter 1 (Laws 2017) clarifying that a satisfactory program in health education in accordance with the needs of pupils in all grades that includes the several dimensions of health, is now required to:

- *include mental health and the relation of physical and mental health; and*
- *designed to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.*

NOTE: Schools are expected to utilize resources to develop/adopt their own curriculum aligned with NYS Learning Standards, and tailor instruction and programs based on needs identified at the local level.

(May 2018 NYSED Board of Regents Permanent Adoption for a July 2018 implementation date in schools; [NYSED Board of Regents](#)).

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/518p12ppca1.pdf>

New York State Education Department (NYSED) Amendments to Commissioner's Regulation (CR) Health Education Part 135

Schools may already be providing “mental health” education in classrooms as previously stated in CR's Part 135, however this new legislation formalizes this in law.

With elementary and secondary health education in schools being required to instruct on mental health; staff, students, families and communities will be more openly discussing both mental health well-being and mental health challenges, and able to address awareness, prevention and treatment.

New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

In August of 2017, the NYSED, the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), and the Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS), established the Advisory Council of over 75 expert cross-disciplinary and cross-sector partners, to develop resources, and recommendations supporting mental health education in schools.



New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

- Mental Health Classroom Resources - identifying skills and functional knowledge students should acquire, and tools to address stigma and promote best educational practices.
- Resources: “Instructional Framework” being developed, aligns with the New York State (NYS) Learning Standards, for health education in the classroom reflective of skills and functional knowledge, and scope and sequence for all levels focused on health-related outcomes; and an instructional resource section.

New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

Research has shown that the quality of the school climate may be the single most predictive factor in any school's capacity to promote student achievement.

New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

- Therefore, the Advisory Council is recommending schools understand and expand obligations to support elementary and secondary level teachers instruction on mental health education, by including a comprehensive approach supporting various components for enhancing mental health well-being for schools, students, families and communities. Resources are inclusive, as schools can, and should go beyond providing only classroom instruction on mental health and focus efforts on developing a positive school climate and culture.

New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

Additional Resources being developed:

Multiple Dimensions of Mental Health - concept of mental health as something more than an illness, on a continuum of well-being, and an integral part of overall health. Resources: Evidence-based resources and best-practice curricula examples regarding the connection between mental health, social emotional learning, well-being, health education, nutrition, physical education and physical activity; mental health defined.

Mental Health Resources for Schools, Students, Families - facilitating relationships between schools and communities within school-based structures, county resources, staff and parent education; and topics to discuss when collaborating with community agencies. Resources: Guidance for fostering school and community collaborations; “Resource Toolkit” for cultivating partnerships.

New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

Additional resources being developed:

Supporting a Positive School Climate and Culture - describing how a school can decrease stigma and increase mental health awareness, knowledge and understanding. Resources: “Needs Assessment Checklist”, and evidenced based frameworks for promoting positive school climate and culture.

Implementation - leverage school, community and family partnerships to build upon existing policies, structures and resources to increase capacity and develop a sustainable structure. Resources: Sample mental health and well-being school policy; links to prevention and care tools.

What Schools Can Do Now

Review and assess	Review and assess current health education curricula for alignment to new mental health education requirements;
Build	Recommended to build capacity and strengthen relationships between educators and pupil personnel services (school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor, school nurse);
Develop	Recommended to develop school-community partnerships with mental health professionals and organizations;
Identify	Recommended to identify strategies to engage families and students in supporting mental health and well-being;
Support	Recommended to support a positive school climate and culture; and
Leverage	Recommended to leverage partnerships and build upon existing resources to develop a sustainable infrastructure for mental health.

NYSED Next Steps

Continue in a multi-prong, transparent and timely approach to address any next steps resulting from the Advisory Council's Recommendations presented to the Board of Regents.

June of 2018 - Release of the "Instructional Framework" and additional evidence-based and best practice resources.

December of 2018 - Advisory Council Meeting for a debriefing opportunity, and to discuss any lessons learned to improve ongoing implementation.

Additional Information

- NYSED's Office of Curriculum and Instruction: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/health/>
- NYS Center for School Health: <http://www.schoolhealthny.com>
- NYSED's Office of Student Support Services Social Emotional Learning: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sel>
- Mental Health Association in NYS, Inc.: <https://mhanys.org/>
- NYS Office of Mental Health: <https://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/about/>
- NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services: <https://www.oasas.ny.gov/>
- NYS Department of Health Prevention Agenda: https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/