BEYOND THE MASK
Promoting Transformation and Healing in School Reopening
COLLECTING MENTAL HEALTH DATA

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THE CHALLENGE

Schools should collect quality student-level mental health data that allows for the ongoing assessment of need. Schools should track mental health need over time, how they are spending money on mental health supports; and link that data to information on characteristics like the demographics of each school. States should also regularly administer a survey to evaluate how students are feeling and whether school-based mental health supports are working.

The U.S. Department of Education required each state to submit a reopening plan outlining how they were using and planned on using [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds](#). The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) conducted an analysis of 37 state plans to better understand if and how schools were collecting student mental health data.

In general, states are not collecting robust mental health data. All states can improve their mental health data collection strategies. However, a few states are beginning to build out their mental health data collection systems.

STATE SPOTLIGHTS

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut [i] used ESSER funding to procure the Devereux Student Strength Assessment (DESSA) system. DESSA screens students for SEL attributes. They base their screening on the [CASEL5](#), a framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that outlines five key SEL competencies. Connecticut's SEL assessments are strengths-based, in line with Connecticut's commitment to culturally relevant care. Connecticut will integrate student-level data from DESSA into their existing data warehouse, EdSight, and study relationships between DESSA's SEL attributes and student engagement and outcome measures.

- Connecticut is particularly strong on statewide databases and disaggregation. In our **[Core Principles to Reframe Mental and Behavioral Health](#)**, CLASP recommends collecting both qualitative and quantitative data and disaggregating data by race/ethnicity. In creating their reopening plan, The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) collected qualitative data by completing a statewide landscape survey of public schools and conducting focus groups. EdSight provided statewide quantitative data. The report will be complete by the end of the school year. Along with disaggregating data, these strategies allow CSDE to target support to specific districts or populations. CLASP encourages other states to build out statewide databases.

STATE SPOTLIGHTS

DELAWARE

Delaware[ii] used ESSER II CCRSSA funds to develop a Social Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) Plan for providing resources on how to identify and respond to students with mental health challenges. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) **encouraged** all schools to create an evaluation plan to identify academic and non-academic priorities and collect data that addresses those priorities. DDOE recommended all schools establish universal screening processes to identify students who experienced significant stress as a result of the pandemic and noted that universal screening should rely on data specific to identified priorities, in addition to measures like attendance data and formal teacher referrals. DDOE recommends that formal SEB screening measures be used to inform universal and classroom level supports, not student level decisions.

MICHIGAN

Michigan[iii] created its own survey to track student wellbeing data—the Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth. The survey is administered to 7th, 9th, and 11th graders. Michigan also uses bhworks, a comprehensive software platform that helps local education agencies (LEAs) gain consent, screen, identify, assess, refer, and monitor treatment for all students. Finally, Michigan plans on participating in the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in Fall 2021.

OREGON

Oregon[iv] conducts an anonymous voluntary survey of 6th, 8th, and 11th grade youth in collaboration with the Oregon Health Authority. In 2020, the survey was revised and renamed the Student Health Survey.[v] Going forward, the survey will be administered in even numbered years (2020, 2022, 2024, etc.). The Oregon Department of Education plans on using data from this survey to identify strengths, challenges, gaps, and opportunities as they implement ESSER strategies.

KEY RECOMMENDATION: DISAGGREGATE DATA

Comprehensive data surveillance systems can help to assess the quality of implementation, evaluate the effectiveness of supports and services, and identify gaps or new priorities. Data should inform school or district wide decisions and should be shared with the U.S. Department of Education. To be most effective, schools should prioritize universal mental health screenings and use multiple measures in that screening process, as suggested by DDOE. Schools should also continuously collect student mental health data throughout the school year to assess ongoing need and the effectiveness of supports.

To ensure supports are equitable, schools should disaggregate all mental health data by race/ethnicity [vi] and by other identities relevant to their campus. For example, CSDE disaggregates **attendance data by race/ethnicity, free/reduced price meal eligibility, students with disabilities, English learners, as well as by groups such as grade, homeless status, and student learning model.**[vii] Schools and districts that disaggregate their data can better understand which populations have the highest levels of need and which populations are or are not accessing mental health supports. This kind of data can help determine if schools are effectively providing culturally responsive care to their students; if schools need additional resources to provide effective care; and if schools should reevaluate how they are investing their money.

ENDNOTES

[i] https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/06/Connecticut-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf

[ii] https://oese.ed.gov/delaware-arp-esser-state-plan/

[iii] https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/06/Michigan-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf

[iv] https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/06/Oregon-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf

[v] https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/Pages/student-health-survey.aspx

[vi] https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020/06/CLASP%20REPORT%20-FINAL.pdf

[vii] https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/06/Connecticut-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf