

Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee



Report to the Board of Douglas
County Commissioners





Committee Charge

The Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee was charged with determining what school mental health and social emotional initiatives, programs, services, and approaches really work and recommending those that could be supported, expanded or implemented with one-time funding from the County in partnership with the schools and the community.

Funding recommendations are based on the programs or strategies endorsed by the Committee and on the best available subject matter expertise and research.

Supportive Mental Health for Students Committee Members

- Keith Sousa – Douglas County School District
- Julie Felske – Platte River Academy
- Sarah Ericson – 18th Judicial District Attorney's Office
- Shelly Sack – 18th Judicial District Probation
- Dr. Stephanie Crawford Goetz – Douglas County School District
- Jason Hopcus – NAMI Arapahoe/Douglas Counties
- Dr. Sarah Davidon – Mental Health Colorado
- Erin White – Douglas County School District Parent/Manna Connect
- Mia Hayden and Melanie Zhou (rotating) – ThunderRidge High School Students/Oasis Mental Health

Value Statement

An effective social emotional and mental health system for youth in Douglas County that supports a culture of safety and wellbeing would include:



In-School Programming



Easy Access to Services for Youth



Increased Awareness of Mental Health and Safety



Trauma Informed Communication and Collaboration between Systems



Funding Recommendation

Fund assessments in each participating school in order to understand the strengths, needs and gaps in mental health services and student safety.

Partners include schools in Douglas County, law enforcement, community partners, parents and students.



“The foundation of school safety rests in creating cultures and climates of safety, respect and emotional support.”

(U.S. Secret Service, 2004;2018)

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey is designed to assess:

- Substance Abuse
- Antisocial Behavior
 - Violence
 - Mental Health
 - Risk Factors
- Protective Factors

One risk factor, according to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey is that 48% of high school students surveyed in Douglas County School District (DCSD), including Charter schools, report a low commitment to their school.



Mental Health and School Safety Assessments (School Climate Survey) and Supported School Programming

Safe Communities Safe Schools (SCSS) assessments or the Mental Health Colorado (MHC) School Assessment Tool should be made available to every school in the County.

Each school implementing an assessment should establish, or use an already established, multi-disciplinary team to lead the assessment process, evaluate the results, and implement any resulting programming. Student voices should be prioritized.

Each school or district's multi-disciplinary team could request county funding to implement or expand training, programming and policies based on the assessment results and community input with an emphasis on social emotional learning and mental health supports.

Guidelines for the County funds will be established and should include requirements for sustainability planning, the use of best practices and proven effective programs.



As part of the SCSS project, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at CU Boulder offers school climate surveys with options for students, staff and parents.

SCSS School Climate Survey Offers:

Critical data about strengths and challenges that can be used to set priorities for action.

Opportunity to carefully select evidence-based programs, practices and policies based on data-identified needs and priorities.

Evidence that existing strategies and programs are obtaining the intended outcomes, or, if challenges still exist, indication that modifications or technical assistance may be needed.



Mental Health Colorado School Assessment Tool

A checklist that scores best practices including:

A school wellness team, or other effort to make mental wellness part of an overall wellness strategy

An established process for mental health, suicide, or substance use screenings and referrals

Social emotional learning programs

School-based mental health and substance use services

Active partnerships with community mental health professionals

Teacher wellness programs and support

Stigma reduction programs

Positive behavioral interventions and supports

A trauma-informed program or approach

A suicide prevention program

The MHC Toolkit defines success and provides practical steps and solutions to achieve best practices in the school. MHC will provide guidance to schools if they need it.



Funding Recommendation

Fund programming, including social emotional learning, mental health supports and services, and suicide prevention and intervention, that is supported by the mental health and school safety assessments.

Partners include Douglas County, schools in Douglas County, law enforcement, Douglas County Human Services, the Douglas County Mental Health Initiative (DCMHI), community partners, parents and students.



Social Emotional Learning



Social emotional learning is the process through which children acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

- “What is SEL?” Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Accessed December 3, 2017.

“These skills are quite a bit different from the traditional ‘reading, writing and arithmetic’ taught in schools but research has proven that social emotional skills are essential to success in school, work and life. Furthermore, building social emotional learning helps students gain resilience, which is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.”

- Mental Health Colorado Tool Kit



In-School Programming

A variety of curricula can be found using vetted registries of age-appropriate, positive youth development programs designed to promote health and well-being of children and teens.

The DCSD provides multiple prevention and SEL programs throughout the district and offers curricula that it purchases to Charter schools.

The District has identified additional SEL curricula that could be added to its repertoire including:

- The Incredible Years Series
- The PAX Good Behavior Game
- Riding the Wave
- Second Step

Social Emotional Learning Curricula

“A recent analysis of school-based, universal SEL programs involving more than 270,000 kindergarten through high school students found that these students demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior and an 11 percentile point gain in academic achievement.”

- “The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning a meta-analysis of school based universal interventions.” Child Development 82, no 1(2011):405-432





Prioritizing Suicide Prevention

Suicide was the leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 in Colorado in 2017.

Students who feel safe at school are over three times less likely to attempt suicide.

Among Colorado's High School Youth 1 in 4 felt so sad or hopeless almost everyday for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.

1 in 7 seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.



Examples of effective suicide prevention and intervention programs:

Sources of Strength

High school evidence-based practice that works to help prevent student suicide by building a support system within the school. Resilient Me is the companion program for middle schools.

Signs of Suicide

Universal, school-based depression awareness and suicide prevention program designed for middle and high school students.

Second Wind Fund

Provides access to life-saving mental health treatment for youth 19 and under who are at risk for suicide in Colorado and pays for up to 12 sessions of therapy when there is a barrier to treatment.

ASIST

Training for family, friends and other community members who may be the first to talk with a person at risk so they may help them stay safe and seek further help.



Sample Implementation Costs

To start a new **Sources of Strength** program in a charter school with support from a school district trainer costs \$1630 for startup and \$1080 for annual continuing support.

Sources of Strength training and startup costs for a private school are \$5000 then \$500 per year. Private schools could share a trainer among them to lessen costs.

To provide **ASIST** training to 125 individuals costs \$10,000. Research shows that an average ASIST trained person will help a minimum of 6 people.



Funding Recommendation

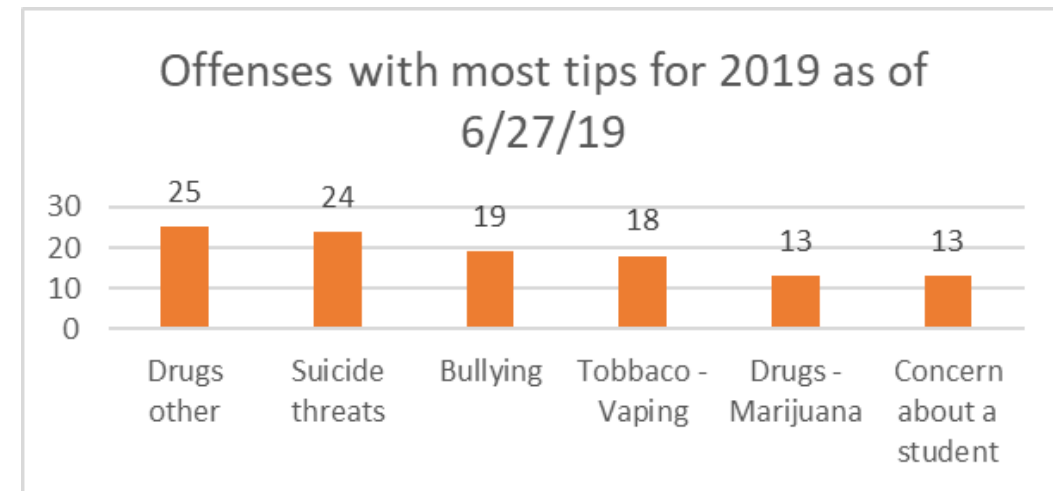
Fund expansion of the Text-a-Tip program to include an enhanced mental health-focused response.

Partners include Douglas County, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) - which hosts Text-a-Tip, local police departments, community partners and mental health providers, DCMHI, schools in Douglas County, parents and students.



Text-a-Tip

In Douglas County students can use two anonymous reporting systems, Safe2Tell and Text-a-Tip. Safe2Tell is a statewide program monitored by the Colorado Office of the Attorney General and Text-a-Tip is monitored by DCSO. In both systems tips are electronically delivered to school district staff and School Resource Officers.



This data suggests that developing a more comprehensive response to tips that are mental health issues may be an opportunity for one-time funding from the county to impact both mental health and school safety.



Funding Recommendation

Fund a mental health navigator program for youth connected to Text-a-Tip, including access to funds for treatment, by contracting with a community-based partner.

Partners include Douglas County, the DCSO - which hosts Text-a-Tip, local police departments, community partners and mental health providers, DCMHI, parents and students.



An Expanded Text-a-Tip Program

Expand the collaboration responding to incoming Text-a-Tips to include law enforcement, schools and a mental health navigator.

Contract with a youth and family focused mental health navigator that will be responsible for:

Responding in real time to appropriate mental health related text-a-tips

Help connect youth or families with already existing community resources, like the Colorado Crisis Line, their school-based counselor or the Second Wind Fund.

Collaborate and coordinate with the new youth focused CRT under the Douglas County Mental Health Initiative

Manage funds designated to help families facing financial barriers access mental health care (high insurance deductibles, low-income families, etc.)



Increased Awareness of
Mental Health and Safety

Funding Recommendation

Fund an age-effective marketing campaign with the goals of raising awareness of the expanded Text-a-Tip program, reducing stigma and encouraging on-going community conversations about mental health.

Partners include Douglas County, schools in Douglas County, marketing experts, DCMHI, law enforcement, community partners, parents and students.



One of the top ten (10) recommendations for school safety from the CU Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence is the implementation of hands-on training for students and staff on using an anonymous bystander reporting system to encourage the sharing of information and prevention of violence.

Students in Douglas County have access to the anonymous reporting system Text-a-Tip through a partnership of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, local police departments, the Douglas County School District and several private schools. Additionally students have access to Safe2Tell, a statewide reporting system.

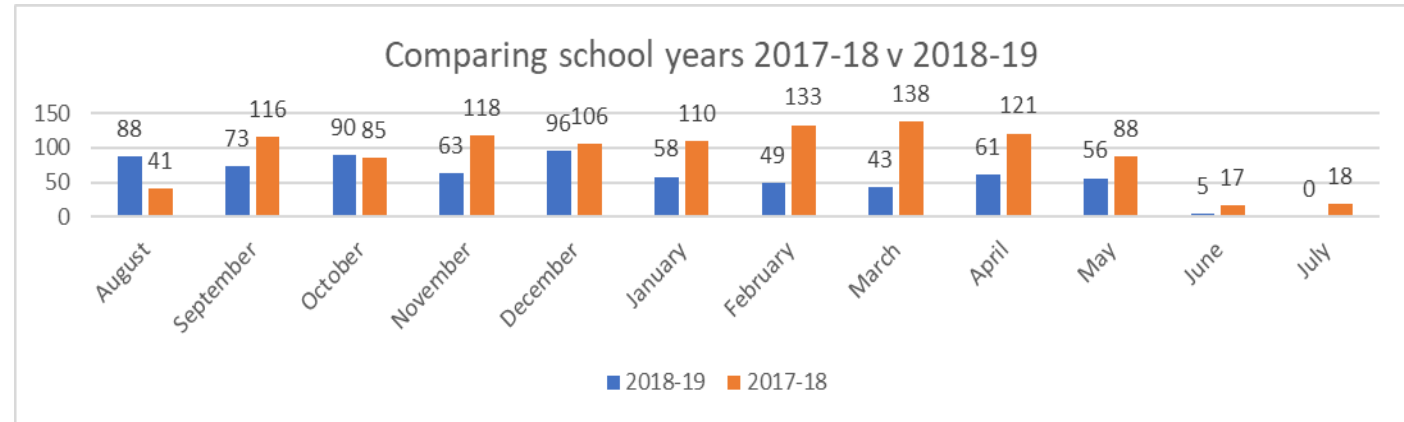


Increased Awareness of
Mental Health and Safety

Text-a-Tip

Total tips submitted during the 2018-2019 school year were down 391 tips from the previous school year.

The student members of our Committee indicate a lack of student knowledge about how Text-a-Tip works or a reluctance to use it, perhaps not understanding what happens with the tip or not wanting to “tell on others.”



Awareness and training efforts by Safe2Tell, similar to our recommendation, have resulted in increased use of that system.

Mental Health Marketing Campaign



Under its Rebranding of Mental Health and Substance Use goal, the Douglas County Mental Health Initiative (DCMHI) should lead the development and execution of a youth-focused education and anti-stigma mental health campaign.

DCMHI should empanel a youth advisory group and a parent group to guide the marketing campaign process.

The campaign should include updated marketing for the expanded Text-a-Tip program and help students and the public understand how and when to use the system, explain the process, and address concerns identified by the advisory youth.



Increased Awareness of
Mental Health and Safety

Funding Recommendation

Fund youth Mental Health First Aid training in all middle and high schools in the County. Mental Health First Aid should be incorporated into the standard curriculum for all students.

**This may help schools fulfill required standards for mental health supports as outlined in House Bill 19-1120, passed in the 2019 legislative session.*

Partners include Douglas County, schools in Douglas County, law enforcement, community partners, parents and students.



Increased Awareness of
Mental Health and Safety

Mental Health First Aid for Students

An age-appropriate Mental Health First Aid training for all middle and high school students accomplishes the following:

Helps to normalize mental health – we are all on the spectrum of mental health

Recognizes youth are more likely to share mental health and safety concerns with peers and prepares them to support one another.

Importantly, the training also highlights when and how a trusted adult, or anonymous reporting system, should be notified. Warning signs of crisis, suicide or violence should not be ignored.

Mental Health First Aid should be incorporated into the standard curriculum on an on-going basis and should include a plan for sustainability.



Trauma Informed Communication
and Collaboration between Systems

Funding Recommendation

Fund the production or purchase of Trauma Informed Care training for school employees, parents and students.

Partners include Douglas County, law enforcement, Douglas County Human Services, all schools in Douglas County, DCMHI, mental health professionals, parents and students.



Trauma Informed Care Training

“A child’s ability to cope is significantly undermined after witnessing one or more overwhelmingly stressful events, such as violence between caretakers or being abused. Traumatic experience in one’s childhood can diminish concentration, memory and other abilities students need to succeed in school, and it can lead to poor coping skills, substance use, and smoking.”

- “The Problem: Prevalence of Trauma.” *Helping Traumatized Children Learn.*



Trauma Informed Care in Schools

“Once schools understand the educational impacts of trauma, they can become safe, supportive environments where students make positive connections with adults and peers, manage their trauma symptoms so they can behave appropriately, and feel confident to learn.”

-Mental Health Colorado Toolkit





Universal Trauma Informed Training

Trauma informed training should be provided in an easily accessible format, including online versions, and the content should be varied for the intended audience. School employees, parents and students should all have access to the training.

Trauma informed training becomes the backbone for Handle with Care.



Funding Recommendation

Fund the implementation of Handle with Care, a trauma notification protocol, in every school.

Partners include Douglas County, law enforcement agencies, the Douglas County Department of Human Services, schools in Douglas County, DCMHI, parents and students.

Handle with Care

Handle with Care should be in every school to lessen the impacts of trauma on students' abilities to learn, form relationships and avoid problematic behaviors.

Handle with Care is a collaboration with law enforcement agencies, Human Services, and schools. Law enforcement and the Department of Human Services issue a Handle with Care notice to schools when a student has been exposed to violence or other traumatic events. Schools then incorporate trauma informed responses and supports as needed.

Handle with Care strengthens the collaboration and communication between systems and provides critical information to schools without violating confidentiality.

The Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee is making recommendations in the context of an integrated approach to school safety, mental health and social emotional learning.

This includes recognizing other efforts the County is involved in that will support and are complementary to the recommendations of the committee.

Some ideas and recommendations from the Committee and the community, particularly those that are on-going, will be folded into the work of the DCMHI.

The Douglas County Mental Health Initiative is a collaboration of 40 individuals and organizations which has implemented:



TWO COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAMS (CO-RESPONDER MODELS) WITH A THIRD TEAM BEING ADDED TO COVER THE ENTIRE COUNTY.



A YOUTH COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM BEGINNING IN THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR.



A MENTAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR THAT SUPPORTS THE COUNTY ATTORNEY IN WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

The DCMHI, has developed a Blueprint for a Community-Based Mental Health Service Delivery System for Douglas County that is in the implementation stage.

Four Action/Goal Committees are addressing:

- Creating a Networked System of Care
- Rebranding Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Develop Programs and Interventions to Address Current Gaps
- Oversight and Expansion of the Community Response Teams

Two additional strategies will be added in 2020:

- Work on Policy and System Improvements
- Develop the Workforce

Summary of Funding Recommendations



Fund assessments in each school in order to understand the strengths, needs and gaps in mental health services and student safety in each participating school.



Fund programming, including social emotional learning, mental health supports and services, and suicide prevention and intervention, that is supported by the mental health and school safety assessments.



Fund expansion of the Text-a-Tip program to include an enhanced mental health focused response.



Fund a mental health navigator program for youth connected to Text-a-Tip, including access to funds for treatment, by contracting with a community-based partner.

Summary of Funding Recommendations



Fund an age-effective marketing campaign with the goals of raising awareness of the expanded Text-a-Tip program, reducing stigma and encouraging on-going community conversations about mental health.



Fund youth Mental Health First Aid training in all middle and high schools in the County. Mental Health First Aid should be incorporated into the standard curriculum for all students.



Fund the production or purchase of a Trauma Informed Care training for school employees, parents and students.

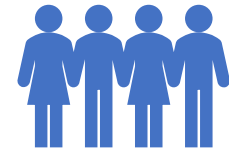


Fund the implementation of Handle with Care, a trauma notification protocol, in every school.

“Working on the Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee has been an amazing experience that I feel privileged to be apart of. In this committee my voice and the voice of students across the county has been given the opportunity to not just be heard but to be thoroughly listened to. I have never been around a more supportive group that gives my opinions and my ideas of action a sense of importance. It is astounding to me that there is so many people come together and work tirelessly to help students across Colorado. After working closely with them, there is no doubt in my mind that we will all collectively make the best decisions to greatly improve and impact the mental health conditions for students”

- Mia Hayden

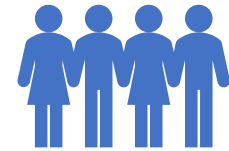
Co-Founder Oasis Mental Health, ThunderRidge High School student



“Being the student voice on the Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee has been an invaluable experience. I saw Douglas County listening to the needs of our student community and making a necessary change. The committee spent hours building funding recommendations, researching programs, and most importantly, prioritizing the mental health of students. After collaborating with this committee of supportive and knowledgeable individuals, I wholeheartedly believe we are taking the first step to vastly improving the social and behavioral health of students across the district.”

- Melanie Zhou

Co-Founder Oasis Mental Health, ThunderRidge High School student





Presentations and Documents Referenced

- Healthy Kids Colorado Survey- HR3 (Douglas County)
- School Mental Health Toolkit - Mental Health Colorado
- CU Boulder Center for Prevention and Study of Violence - Top 10 Recommendations for School Safety
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Study
- Early Identification of Mental Health Issues in Young People
- Presentation by Dr. Sarah Davidon - Mental Health Colorado
- Presentation on Text-a-Tip by Phyllis Harvey, DCSO
- Presentation by Dr. Stephanie Crawford - Douglas County School District
- Youth Crisis and Support Resources in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties
- Presentation by Craig Scott, Director of Value Up
- Sources of Strength fact sheet

Full documents [*available in Appendix*](#)