

Symposium on Trauma-Informed School Mental Health 2.0

(Summary compiled by the UConn Collaboratory on School and Child Health)



Approximately 70 school, behavioral health, community, and research leaders from across the state gathered at the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs on October 23, 2019 to discuss school and community responses to childhood trauma and how to align work around trauma-informed schools in Connecticut. The event, “Symposium on Trauma-Informed School Mental Health 2.0,” was the result of collaboration between organizational members of the Trauma-Informed School Mental Health Task Force, a group that was formed after the original symposium in May 2017. The symposium’s main goal was to continue conversations about broadening and aligning work around trauma-informed schools in Connecticut.

Attendees broke into facilitated discussion groups to focus on four themes: (1) *prevention through screening/early identification*; (2) *enhancing services to meet intensive needs*; (3) *aligning policies and practices to facilitate sustainability*; and (4) *building collaborations across public-private partnerships*. Group facilitators were charged with establishing questions to discuss challenges, opportunities, and actions relevant to the topic area. The groups later re-convened to summarize the big ideas and recommendations for action.

A summary of the big ideas for recommended action included:

- **Commit to focus on sustainability of evidence-informed strategies.**
 - Establish core values as the focus of our work (e.g. healthy relationships), which can provide a unifying mission with long-term commitment – thus reducing the current cycle of weak and not sustained implementation of specific programs and initiatives.
 - Ensure universal core values and a shared agenda cut across CT settings (i.e. pre-service, in-service) to ameliorate challenges associated with the waves of school personnel changes.
- **Identify state-level metrics of success that demonstrate inclusion of social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) outcomes.**
 - Reinforce the critical space for SEB skills as stepping stones to success. A more comprehensive model could be depicted as a strategic plan (i.e. logic model) in that it acknowledges the role of SEB outcomes in the path to more distal yet expected academic and behavioral outcomes.
 - Expand cross-sector and cross-system databases to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of processes, outcomes, successes, and lessons learned.
- **Create statewide consensus on what social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) screening, including universal mental health screening, should look like and provide a roadmap on how to do it.**
 - Develop usable guides (or road map/toolkit) for best practices and available tools, detailed enough to be useful for different school contexts (size, population, developmental level, etc.).
- **Strengthen district awareness of and support around evidence-informed tiered behavioral support strategies.**
 - Identify opportunities to reduce silos in order to (a) increase awareness of the many

- resources across the state and (b) assist in evaluation of gaps in available resources in different contexts.
- Establish a workgroup to develop supporting school guides to include a resource map of available tiered supports – particularly intensifying behavioral supports (e.g. IEPs, behavior support plans) that not only identifies strategies but also shows how strategies fit within their structures and how schools can access various supports.
 - **Identify and remedy cross-sector barriers related to access to appropriate behavioral supports for both students and staff.**
 - Establish a cross-sector workgroup with educators, behavioral health, and medical providers to identify policy-based barriers and opportunities for improving access.
 - Create resource guides on enhancing cross-sector collaborations (e.g. pre-work, activities, ongoing communication, maintaining collaboration).
 - **Enhance outreach with families, communities, and schools around the importance of this work and existing resources.**
 - Partner with caregivers to discuss barriers and build sustainable solutions (e.g. time, transportation, role definition).
 - **Recognize that school staff are experiencing secondary trauma and require social-emotional supports.**
 - Commit to building appropriate supports and policies for wellness and self-care, as well as learning opportunities around trauma.

Connecticut Trauma-Informed School Mental Health Task Force Organizational and Agency Members

Co-Chairs: Jeana Bracey, CHDI; and Sandra M. Chafouleas, UConn CSCH

UConn Collaboratory on School and Child Health (CSCH)
Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI)
Connecticut State Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
Clifford Beers Clinic
The Ana Grace Project

For further information about the CT Trauma-Informed School Mental Health Task Force:
<https://www.plan4children.org/connecting-children-and-families-to-care-workgroups/trauma-informed-school-based-mental-health/>