

<p><i>Subject:</i></p> <p><i>Tier 3 Supports for Student Wellness</i></p>	<p><i>Legal Reference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
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This Technical Advisory continues the New Hampshire Department of Education’s communication regarding the provision of remote instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This technical advisory gives a brief overview of universal strategies to support student wellness and direct access to strategies, resources and information to support local school districts, educators, and families.

What is Student Wellness?

Student wellness is the recognition by schools, districts, and educational professionals that there are many factors that impact a student’s academic attainment. It is an approach that focuses on supporting the whole child. The dimensions of wellness include: Emotional, Personal, Intellectual, Physical, Environmental, Occupational, and Social factors.

Over the past several years, many NH school districts have begun to support student wellness through the development of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavioral Health and Wellness (MTSS-B). MTSS-B is a process by which these districts, in partnership with students, families, and other community providers, organize teams to analyze community data and make a plan to identify, install, and evaluate strategies to support the student body.

Student Wellness and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health response are likely to have a major impact on the strategies, supports, and programs developed within local MTSS-B processes and frameworks. An orientation to remote instruction may result in lost access and availability of services and supports. In addition, the existence of the pandemic itself may increase the need for such services and supports.

The New Hampshire Department of Education’s Bureau of Student Wellness, Office of Social and Emotional Wellness (OSEW), seeks to provide resources and technical assistance to school districts to work collaboratively with their community to respond to the needs of students through MTSS-B. The following information is intended to support local MTSS-B processes and structures. Because MTSS-B is a locally driven process and framework, there is no one size fits all approach and this information may be taken in whole or in part based on the identified needs of each community.

Resources and Information

The intensive tier, or Tier 3, of MTSS-B focuses on identifying the most serious or acute needs of the community and installing evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies to provide support and mitigate negative impacts. The following resources and strategies are organized accordingly:

National Resources:

- **Crisis Text Line:** Text SIGNS to 741741 for 24/7 for anonymous, free crisis counseling. A live, free, trained Crisis Counselor will respond quickly
- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255); TTY: 1-800-799-4889

State Level Resources:

- **NH 211:** www.211nh.org - 211 NH resources from specially trained Information and Referral Specialists available 24/7. Multilingual and TDD Access available. Non-NH call 1.866.444.4211
- **Community Mental Health Centers:**
<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bbh/documents/list-map.pdf>
- **NH Statewide Addiction Crisis Line:** 1-844-711-HELP

Educator Strategies:

NH's educators are not mental health experts. They are not, in most cases, qualified or certified to deliver mental health treatment or services. They are, however, often among the first adults to identify a student who may be experiencing mental health challenges. The following are some basic strategies for how to respond in that circumstance:

1. Understand your schools facilitated referral process. Be able to quickly identify who you communicate with should you identify a student who is struggling and how.
2. Practice active listening with your students and affirm their feelings. Students may be feeling anxious when working on school work alone at home. They may not be self-motivated and find it difficult to engage. Making statements such as, "I understand this way of learning can be difficult for you." Other statements include "I can see that you are frustrated. Let's take this slowly and I will do my best to help you through this."
3. Provide students experiencing feelings of anxiety with information about safe coping strategies: <https://copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety>
4. Encourage students to talk about their feelings. Students may feel isolated during this time. By opening a dialogue about their feelings, it may allow educators to provide the right resources.
5. Encourage students with anxiety and depression to engage in some form of exercise. This may include walking, running, playing outside, yoga, and using YouTube exercise videos.
6. Students may need extra support in planning and organizing at home. Promote the use of a calendar or the use of timers to guide tasks.
7. Remind students it is okay to have the feelings they are having under the circumstances. Some students may find it beneficial to hear they are not alone in their feelings.
8. Learn to recognize the signs of depression. Depression is more than sadness and affects students on a social, behavioral and cognitive level. Symptoms include: memory issues, concentration problems, suicidal thoughts, irritability, decreased school performance, detached, decline in self-care, uncooperative, somatic complaints, low energy, sleep issues, etc.
9. Avoid negative techniques, such as punishment, sarcasm and passive-aggression, as this can reinforce feelings of low self-esteem.
10. Make adjustments or accommodations in assignments without lowering expectations. Adjusting work into smaller, manageable chunks may help students from feeling overwhelmed.

11. Arrange assignments or experiences so the student can be successful and receive recognition for success. Students need to feel teachers believe in their competence.
12. Communicate any concerns to parents.
13. Encourage and praise efforts. Students may be harder on themselves at this time.
14. Provide choices in assignments.
15. Model being calm and having self-control.
16. Increase or decrease student's academic demands during times of manic and depressive states.
17. If a student becomes defiant, avoid arguing or power struggles. Listen and affirm feelings and practice de-escalation strategies.
18. Regularly check in with parents to share observations and to better understand mood cycles.
19. Ask students about their preference in how you respond to their behavior.
20. Provide written and clear expectations.
21. Be predictable, constant and repetitive.

For questions related to this Technical Advisory, please contact:

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