School-Based Mental Health Data Sharing

Why Data Matters in School Mental Health: Using data is key to making smart decisions about mental health supports in schools. It helps teams plan, improve, and adjust services at every level of support. By regularly collecting and reviewing this data, schools can identify areas for improvement, work more effectively with community partners and stakeholders, and ensure the right supports are in place. For more information on using data to drive decisions, see the Comprehensive School Mental Health Implementation Guide for Districts.

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS THROUGH DATA

Data on student mental health trends helps schools proactively address student well-being and ensure early intervention. Sharing this data:
- demonstrates the impact of school-based mental health services on student wellness and success;
- guides decision-making and targeted supports across tiers;
- strengthens collaboration between schools, families, and community providers; and
- supports funding, advocacy, and professional learning opportunities.

WHAT DATA TO SHARE

Share de-identified and aggregate data. Focus on information that highlights how schools promote prevention, intervention, and access to care:
- Number and type of preventive programs offered (e.g., counseling, group therapy)
- Referrals to mental health supports and linkage data, such as the percentage of students successfully connected to community care
- Perception data from climate surveys and student-reported outcomes

COMMUNICATING MENTAL HEALTH INSIGHTS

- Be clear and straightforward: Use plain language and avoid clinical jargon.
- Use stories with data: Pair statistics with short narratives that show real impact on students and school climate.
- Focus on growth: Show changes over time (e.g., increased help-seeking, reduced behavior incidents).
- Destigmatize mental health: Frame data around support, care, and student strengths.
- Respect confidentiality: Share data in accordance with district policy and applicable state and federal privacy laws.

DATA USE IN PRACTICE

- Connect mental health data to academics and attendance
- Use visuals such as charts, dashboards, or tiered support maps for clarity and quick understanding.
- Incorporate findings into professional development and school improvement planning.
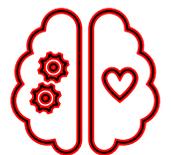
BUILDING A CULTURE OF CARE AND DATA USE

- Review mental health data regularly with staff
- Include mental health professionals in data discussions and leadership teams.
- Review school-wide data to celebrate success and identify gaps.
- Encourage reflective practices and staff wellness alongside student data.

RESOURCES

- PBIS: Data-Based Decision Making
- National Center for School Mental Health
- TN Comprehensive School Mental Health Implementation Guide