



RAISE THE BAR:

Boldly Improve Learning Conditions

Invest in Every Student's Mental Health and Well-Being



Let's acknowledge that in the face of an unprecedented national mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, America's children and youth cannot afford to wait for support. Every student should have access to mental health services and other interventions in school that nurture their overall wellbeing so they may build the social, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary to succeed academically and in all areas of their lives.

"Raise the Bar: Lead the World" is the U.S. Department of Education's call to action to transform education and unite around what works—based on decades of experience and research—to advance educational equity and excellence. As part of our Raise the Bar efforts to boldly improve learning conditions, the Department is investing in every student's mental health and well-being.

The research is clear ... children who experience unaddressed mental health issues are more likely to face challenges in school, such as being more likely to repeat a grade, experience chronic absenteeism, and drop out of school. Amid the pandemic, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that 1 in 3 high school students experienced poor mental health, 1 in 6 adolescents experienced a major depressive episode, and 20 percent of teens seriously considered suicide. Schools are the gateway to needed services for many young people. Schools can provide physical, behavioral, and mental health services directly or establish referral systems to connect students to community-based sources of care. When a student has access to mental health supports in school, they are six times more likely to receive the interventions they need to thrive.



Keys to Improving the Well-Being of All Students

The Department is committed to working with parents, families, educators, and others to meet students' mental health needs. We are assisting state and local leaders to grow the knowledge and skills of professionals currently in schools, expand the supply of mental health professionals who can work with students, and increase access to funding through the Medicaid program to support school health services, including mental health services. Robust investments and strategic action in the areas below represent key levers to address the youth mental health crisis.



BUILD CAPACITY

Support existing school personnel to meet the mental health needs of students



GROW THE PROFESSION

Increase the supply of diverse mental health professionals who can deliver school-based services to students in need



FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Increase access to funding sources and strengthen infrastructure capacity so schools can connect students to mental health services

Visit [Raise the Bar: Boldly Improve Learning Conditions](#) to read more about the specific strategies outlined here, connect to resources and technical assistance, and learn about federal grants that can support these strategies.