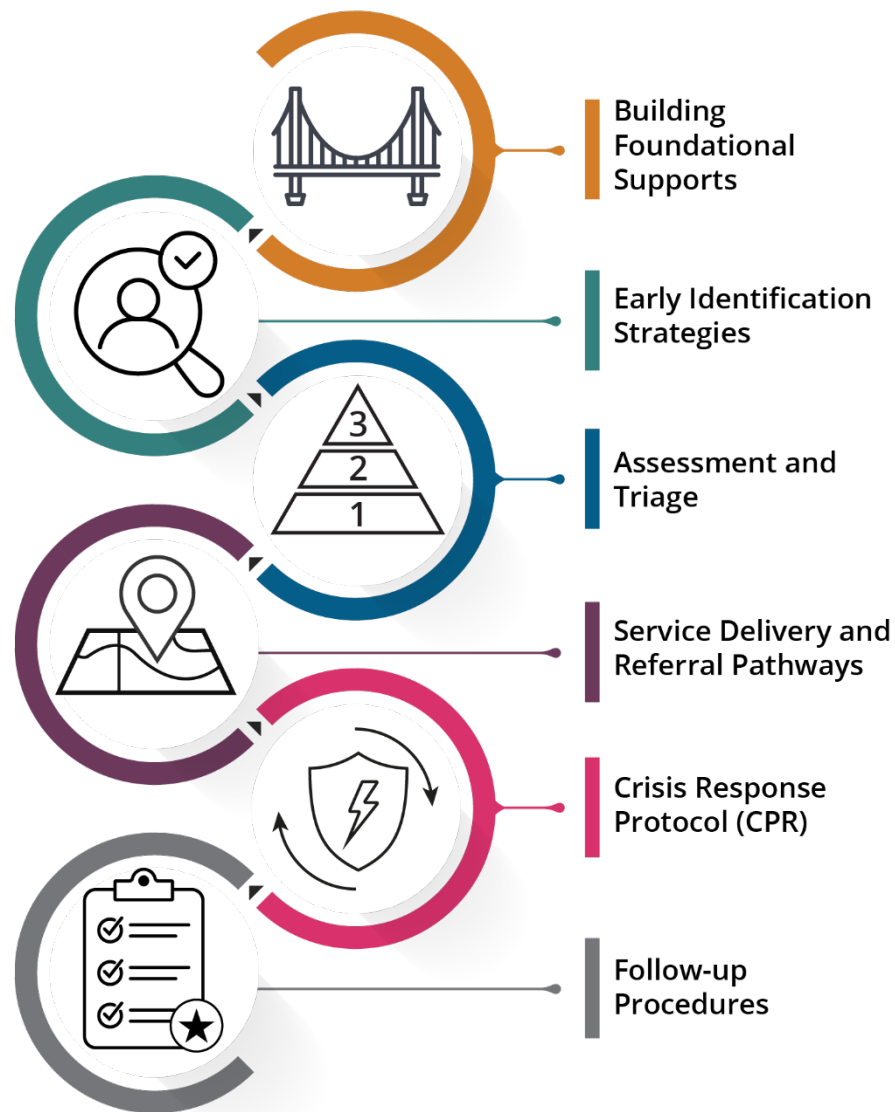


APPENDIX A: SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH (SBMH) FRAMEWORK ROADMAP

This roadmap outlines a six-phase approach for building and sustaining comprehensive student mental health supports. Each phase represents a connected component of a larger system designed to promote prevention, early intervention, coordinated care, crisis response, and ongoing student support. The sections that follow describe each phase in greater detail, including key practices and implementation considerations for schools.

The SBMH Implementation Roadmap:

A Six-Phase Framework for Student Mental Health



PHASE 1: BUILDING FOUNDATIONAL SUPPORTS



Strong school-based mental health systems begin with a solid foundation. This phase focuses on establishing the structures, partnerships, and shared commitments necessary to support long-term implementation and sustainability.

Schools should prioritize collaboration, leadership support, and clearly defined goals to ensure mental health initiatives are integrated into the broader school environment rather than treated as standalone efforts.

Assemble a Multidisciplinary Team

Form a multidisciplinary team that may include administrators, teachers, school counselors, social workers, psychologists, students, and families to ensure diverse perspectives and sustainable ownership.

Cultivate Continuous Buy-In

Secure administrative support and foster a school-wide commitment to mental health as a shared responsibility.

Establish SMART Goals

Create goals that are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

PHASE 2: EARLY IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES



Early identification helps schools recognize student needs before concerns escalate into more significant academic, behavioral, or mental health challenges. This phase emphasizes proactive screening, observation, and referral practices that support timely intervention.

Effective identification strategies rely on appropriate tools, clear consent procedures, and collaboration among educators, families, and support staff to ensure students receive the right level of support as early as possible.

Select Appropriate Screening Tools

Use:

“Wide-net” screening tools for universal identification

More targeted diagnostic tools for specific clinical assessments

Implement Consent Protocols

Establish clear parental consent procedures that comply with state laws and FERPA/HIPAA requirements.

PHASE 3: ASSESSMENT AND TRIAGE



Once concerns are identified, schools must determine the level and type of support needed. This phase focuses on assessing student needs, prioritizing interventions, and matching students with appropriate services through a tiered support approach. Assessment and triage processes should be comprehensive, culturally responsive, and grounded in evidence-based practices to ensure interventions align with each student’s unique strengths and needs.

Conduct Comprehensive Problem Analysis

Define student concerns in measurable terms. Use specific descriptions rather than vague statements (e.g., describe observable behaviors instead of simply stating a student is “anxious”).

Apply the MTSS Framework

Provide:

- Tier 1 (Universal) supports
- Tier 2 (Targeted) interventions
- Tier 3 (Intensive) services

Match supports to the severity and nature of student needs.

Use Evidence-Based Interventions (EBPs)

Prioritize interventions that are culturally appropriate and responsive to students' linguistic, social, and developmental needs.

PHASE 4: SERVICE DELIVERY AND REFERRAL PATHWAYS



Schools play an important role in connecting students and families to both internal supports and community-based services. This phase outlines the systems and partnerships needed to coordinate care and reduce barriers to accessing support.

Effective referral pathways promote communication, continuity of care, and trust between schools, families, and service providers while ensuring students receive timely and appropriate assistance.

Map Internal and External Pathways

Develop clear pathways to connect students and families with:

- School-based services
- Community mental health providers
- External agencies and partners

Formalize partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) when appropriate.

Address Barriers to Access

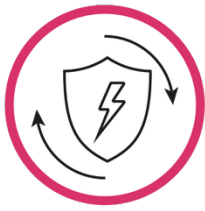
Create systems that reduce barriers such as:

- Transportation
- Scheduling
- Language access
- Family engagement challenges

Utilize “Warm Hand-Offs”

Introduce students and families directly to service providers whenever possible to build trust and improve continuity of care.

PHASE 5: CRISIS RESPONSE PROTOCOL (CRP)



Schools must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively when students experience acute mental health crises or safety concerns. This phase establishes procedures for assessing risk, ensuring immediate safety, and coordinating appropriate intervention and support. Clear crisis response protocols help staff respond consistently, reduce uncertainty during high-risk situations, and prioritize student safety and stabilization.

Stay Calm and Ensure Immediate Safety

Never leave a student alone during acute distress. Remove access to means of self-harm and involve the school crisis team immediately.

Ask Directly About Suicide Risk

Use clear, direct, and nonjudgmental language to assess:

- Suicidal thoughts
- Plans
- Means
- Intent

Example: “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

Take Action Based on Risk Level

Respond according to the level of risk:

- **High risk:** immediate emergency response and parent/guardian notification
- **Moderate risk:** safety planning and increased monitoring
- **Lower risk:** referral and follow-up supports

Use district protocols and available crisis resources as appropriate.

PHASE 6: FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES



Ongoing support and monitoring are essential after a crisis response or intervention has occurred. This phase focuses on re-entry planning, collaborative safety planning, and reviewing the effectiveness of services and supports.

Consistent follow-up helps schools maintain continuity of care, address ongoing needs, and support students as they transition back into their academic and social environments.

Develop “Return to Learn” Plans

Support successful re-entry following a crisis by:

- Identifying learning gaps
- Providing academic accommodations
- Designating safe spaces and trusted adults

Collaborative Safety Planning

Work with students and families to identify:

- Warning signs
- Coping strategies
- Support contacts
- Safety resources

Monitor Progress and Fidelity

Review service delivery regularly and use fidelity checks to ensure interventions are implemented consistently and effectively.