

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

School-Based Mental Health Services and School Psychologists



Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life.

Good mental health is critical to children's success in school and life. Research demonstrates that students who receive social-emotional and mental health support achieve better academically. School climate, classroom behavior, on-task learning, and students' sense of connectedness and well-being all improve as well. Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness but also encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral health and the ability to cope with life's challenges.

Schools are an ideal place to provide mental health services to children and youth.

Unfortunately, too many children and youth with mental health problems are not getting the help they need and, when left unmet, mental health problems are linked to costly negative outcomes such as academic and behavior problems, dropping out, and delinquency. Schools, however, are ideal settings to provide mental health services. School-based professionals like school psychologists know the students, parents, and other staff. The learning environment provides the right context for prevention and intervention. And, importantly, school is where children spend most of their day.

School mental health services focus on the child within the school setting and on collaboration with families.

School-based mental health services range from prevention and skills development to intervention and evaluation, referral and collaboration, and consultation and counseling. School psychologists are trained to link mental health to learning and behavior in terms of prevention, intervention and outcomes evaluation. They team with parents, other school-based mental health professionals, and community service providers to help create a continuum of services that meet the needs of the individual child.

School psychologists provide a continuum of mental health services such as:

- Consultation with school staff and/or parents regarding the social/emotional/behavioral needs of children and youth.
- Consultation with school staff regarding classroom and/or school-wide approaches to behavior and to develop positive behavior supports and interventions.
- Screening, evaluation, identification and referral for children exhibiting emotional disturbances.
- Planning and implementing appropriate academic and other educational supports.

Ensuring a healthy start.



Promoting a bright future.



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS

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The National Mental Health & Education Center for Children & Families

As one of many NASP public service programs, the Center fosters best practices in education and mental health by providing information on topics affecting today's youth, families, and schools. The Center's goal is to improve outcomes for children and youth by helping parents, teachers, and other related professionals work more effectively together to promote healthy learning and development. The Center offers free or low cost resources, programs, and services that promote effective strategies, greater collaboration, and improved outcomes on a wide range of psychological, social/emotional, and academic issues. Resources can be downloaded or ordered from the Center website or ordered directly from the Center.

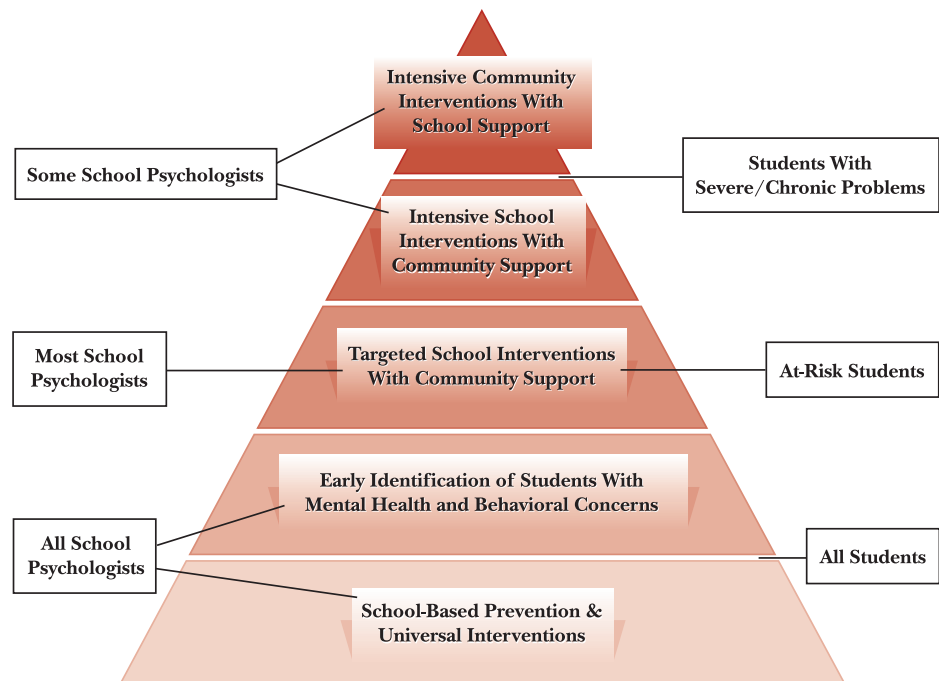
For materials or further information contact the Center by phone at (301) 657-0270; by e-mail at center@naspweb.org; or on the web at www.nasponline.org/families.

School psychologists provide a continuum of mental health services Continued from page 1

- Conducting functional behavior assessments and/or social skills instruction.
- Measuring progress and improvement both for individuals and also for programs.
- Interventions for students with chronic behavior and emotional needs.
- Small group and/or individual counseling for such issues as social skills, anger control, etc.
- Staff development on topics such as positive behavior supports and intervention, prevention of violence, crisis planning and intervention, etc.
- Resources and information to school staff and/or parents regarding characteristics, intervention, and treatment of disorders.
- Coordination and referral of children and families to community service agencies, related to mental health needs.

School psychologists, like school counselors and school social workers, help link student needs and school services with community services to provide a continuum of mental health care.

The current mental health system is inadequate to meet the growing need among children and youth. We need a continuum of services for children, within which schools play an integral part. Collaboration with community services providers and families is critical, particularly when supporting students with needs at the intensive end of the continuum.



The Continuum of School Mental Health Services

From "Communication Planning and Message Development: Promoting School-Based Mental Health Services" in *Communication*, Vol. 35, No. 1. National Association of School Psychologists, 2006

For more information on school-based mental health services and the role of school psychologists in providing these services, visit www.nasponline.org.
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