Supporting SEL and Mental Health During COVID-19

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As states and local communities across the country grapple with the unprecedented changes brought on by coronavirus (COVID-19), it is critical to ensure that state education agencies (SEAs), district and school leaders, educators, and families make a concerted effort to support the social-emotional and mental health needs of students. CCSSO compiled the following resources and state examples to inform SEAs' ongoing efforts in this area.

State Examples – Mental Health
The following state examples were culled from state education agency websites.

The **Ohio Department of Education** released recommendations on How to Support Your Child's Health and Well-being During Ohio's Ordered School-Building Closure. The recommendations include steps parents and caregivers can take to support students who may be experiencing stress, confusion, fear or anxiety as well as important notes about ensuring students' ongoing behavioral health needs are met, particularly for students who receive behavioral health services in a school setting.

Oklahoma State Department of Education provided resources and guidance for distance learning school counseling that was shared directly with Oklahoma school counselors. The guidance lays out potential benefits and challenges of distance learning school counseling, a checklist for counseling students in a virtual environment and best practices. The guidance also instructs counselors to handle concerns about suicidal ideation and child-abuse and neglect the same as on-site settings and provides steps to take.

The **Illinois State Board of Education** developed a new mental health webpage and sent a letter to all district leaders encouraging them to guard the health of families, both physically and mentally. The webpage contains resources to reassure students coping with scary situations, help adults talk to children about COVID-19, and learn to manage anxiety and stress via the new webpage.

Kansas State Department of Education convened the Continuous Learning Task Force to develop guidelines for Kansas School Districts, which include content and grade- level guidelines for student support services and SEL, including the importance of doing regular check-ins with students and encouraging students to identify/name how they are feeling (see page 35).

The Michigan Department of Education partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to develop an educator's guide to supporting the social and emotional needs of students and to provide ongoing outreach and support. The guide also includes resources for educators to share with families and caregivers to promote students' well-being during COVID-19, including information on assistance programs, maintaining routines, and how to help children who are experiencing anxiety.

Minnesota Department of Education's Federal ESEA Title Programs and COVID-19 Questions and Answers: Funding, Services, and Programming provides clarity to districts on how to leverage funding streams to support students' health and wellbeing. In response to a question on if a district can revise

Title IV, Part A to include additional Safe and Healthy supports, the Department responded: "*Yes. For example you could use it to establish a mental health hotline for students and families to deal with the COVID-19 illness by contracting a vendor. Supplementing to add additional counseling and social work services would also be allowable revisions.... Note that this is also an allowable use of Title I Part A monies for any Schoolwide Program with the consent of the school's stakeholders.*"

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction released a message for parents, school staff and others working with children outlining general principles for reassuring students and making them feel heard and safe. DPI also pointed to The Coping Skills toolbox developed by Baldwin County Public Schools and used by counselors to support emotional well-being and reduce stress and focus on healthy coping strategies.

Tennessee Department of Education developed a series of school closure toolkits by topic, including health and wellness. The toolkit includes a checklist for district and school leaders, alongside templates for individual student support plans, teacher or student support staff service plans and medication tracking.

The Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health released a joint memorandum on the continuity of mental health services emphasizing that "mental health services are more essential than ever during this time of heightened uncertainty and anxiety for students, when the traditional support of familiar, structured educational environments is no longer available." The agencies jointly encouraged supervisory districts/unions and schools to work with school staff, their Designated Mental Health Agencies, and other contracted providers to maintain mental health supports for students, without a break in services whenever possible, noting there is no need to pause such services while awaiting possible adjustments to IEPs or 504 plans.

The Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction curated resources for parents, caregivers, and educators to support students' well-being and school safety. Resources include OPSI's CARE Online Training module, a research- and web-based course to provide educators and other school staff with guidance to help students who may be going through difficult times.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction facilitates weekly Community of Practice virtual meetings for the field to share resources around teleservices, group work, self-care, and mental health supports for schools. DPI has also curated online resources in the areas of mental health, school counseling, school nurses and health services, school psychology and school social work.

State Examples – SEL
The following state examples were culled from state education agency websites.

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) compiled resources to support educators during remote learning. The resources cover a range of topics, including health, school counseling, and social emotional learning and are continually updated by DDOE as they work with district and charter

curriculum directors. [Resources for social emotional learning](#) can be found on page 10 and include a [checklist for building developmental relationships](#) during COVID-19 that was developed by the Search Institute.

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) developed a [searchable database](#) which includes SEL and wellness supports for PK-12 students. IDOE also speaks specifically to SEL and student voice in their [Continuous Learning Guidance Plan](#). The IDOE Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellness team has been [hosting live professional development](#) for educators and has created [continuous learning weekly challenges](#) for parents and educators which includes a SEL section.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) partnered with Transforming Education and Education Development Center (EDC) to host a [series of webinars](#) on supporting students' SEL and mental health needs in the COVID-19 era, including two focused on setting up effective district-wide systems to support students' and educators' mental health needs. DESE and its partners plan to set up facilitated peer-sharing meetings focused on topics such as supporting students' SEL growth in the COVID-19 era, addressing students' acute mental health needs, and promoting mental health and connectedness among school staff and is asking interested participants to fill out a survey to inform the work. The website also [houses a repository](#) of mental health and wellbeing resources from school districts and communities from across the commonwealth.

Michigan Department of Education is providing [SEL resources for children and adults](#), including free access to relevant online learning courses for educators through [Michigan Virtual](#). The Superintendent of Public Instruction also [shared a letter](#) to school district superintendents emphasizing that SEL principles and practices are especially important given school closures and that MDE was committed to sharing resources to help support the SEL needs of students, staff, and families.

Minnesota Department of Education [shared resources](#) on school climate during distance learning, underscoring that the transition to distance learning can be a challenge in many ways—mentally, physically, and emotionally. The curated resources focus on ensuring compassion and community in a virtual school climate, adult-SEL, and student-care, self-care and team-care.

Mississippi Department of Education shared PreK-12 [resources for social and emotional learning at home](#). The resources are organized by grade-band and include [family guides for student success](#) in both English and Spanish.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) developed an [extensive list of resources to support remote learning](#) that are organized by audience and topic, including [SEL supports for COVID-19 and beyond.](#) DPI underscores that SEL should be a top priority for state, district, and school leaders particularly given trauma the pandemic may induce for many students, families, teachers, and administrators, and the department.

Oklahoma State Department of Education included guidance on SEL in their [resources for distance learning](#), including a [guide for educators and families](#) on virtual and distance social emotional learning

during coronavirus/COVID-19 reinforcing why it is important to teach SEL at this time, alongside resources for educators and families.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Trauma Sensitive Schools (TSS) Online Professional Development System is publicly available. These modules were put together before COVID-19 but could be particularly helpful for educators as they support students remotely and think ahead to what students will need once schools reconvene.

The Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction previously developed an SEL Online Education Module that is free and open under a creative commons license. The "Social and Emotional Learning in Washington State Schools: Building Foundations and Strategies" module is designed for educators, administrators, school staff, other professionals, and parents who interact with youth as a means to help them build and improve their understanding of social emotional skills.

Mental Health Resources

American School Counselor Association developed a guide for district leaders on planning for virtual/distance school counseling during an emergency.

ChildTrends developed guidance, recommendations, and resources in partnership with the Child Trauma Training Center at the University of Massachusetts on supporting children's emotional well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic. ChildTrends also released a research-based resource sheet on ways to promote children's resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child's infographic and FAQ on "Adverse Childhood Experiences" or "ACEs" and guide on addressing and preventing toxic stress provide an accessible overview of ACEs and toxic stress and research-based recommendations on what to do about it.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness released a resource and information guide on COVID-19 that could be shared with a broad range of stakeholders and encouraged those in need of mental health resources to contact that NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI (6264) Monday through Friday, between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm EST.

National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Nurses Provides tips for talking to children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

The National Center for School Mental Health compiled a number of resources to support mental health during and after COVID-19, including an online training to help prepare school mental health clinicians to use telemental health to provide services and supports to students and families. In addition, NCSMH's School Mental Health Quality Guides provide guidance to school mental health systems to advance the quality of their services and supports and address a range of topics including needs assessment and resource mapping and mental health services and supports (Tier 1).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network released a Parent/CareGiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease in both English and Spanish. The National Child Traumatic Stress

Network also partnered with Teaching Tolerance to [share recommendations](#) for educators supporting students during COVID-19 and resources focused on trauma-informed practice.

UCLA's Center for Mental Health in Schools' released the spring edition of its quarterly e-journal *[Addressing Barriers to Learning](#)*. The edition highlights considerations to support the transition back to school, including reopening schools with a sense of exciting renewal, re-engaging the disconnected in instructional activity, and addressing grief and loss.

SEL Resources

CASEL continues to update their [SEL Resources During COVID-19](#) and has also launched a new initiative – [CASEL CARES](#) – that connects the SEL community with experts to address how SEL can be most helpful in response to today's circumstances.

The Center to Improve SEL & School Safety [compiled resources to support states, districts, and schools](#) as they serve students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic*.*

Committee for Children is providing free, [on-demand Second Step lessons](#), online professional learning for educators and resources for educators and families to use during school closures to support social-emotional learning.

[The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State University](#) is offering the free [Social and Emotional Learning MOOC for Educators](#) now through September 1, 2020. CCSSO provided input on this work, and the course is free and provides up to 25 hours toward continuing professional education credits. This short [Promo Video](#) shares more about the course, which is based upon the CASEL framework. To [learn more](#) about the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Educators Course, or to enroll [click here](#).

Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center developed a resource on [keeping secondary school students connected to school when schooling is remote.](#)

[Pure Edge, Inc](#). is providing free resources to help support students' emotional wellbeing. All the videos are also accessible with voice over and subtitles in English and Spanish.

Sanford Harmony developed [an online toolkit](#) that is free of charge and designed to support educators, families, and caregivers with social emotional learning resources for students of all ages.

Transforming Education's [Trauma Informed SEL Toolkit](#) contains research-based resources, strategies to support educators in implementation, and prompts for facilitating educator learning and engagement with the material. Transforming Education also hosted a webinar showcasing the [toolkit](#) that included explicit conversation about Coronavirus and related resources. The [recording can be accessed here.](#)

Turnaround for Children shared ways to [create physical *and* emotional safety for children](#) as well as [7 tips for adults to reassure children](#).