

Mental Health Student Services Act
Community Engagement Strategies for Evaluation Planning
DRAFT-December 2022

The Commission is in the early stages of evaluation planning for the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA), and will be contracting with an external evaluator to develop an evaluation framework, which will be informed through community engagement. This document presents preliminary strategies for outreach and engagement with a diverse group of community partners to support evaluation planning for the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA).

Key community partners will include:

1. Those receiving MHSSA services and supports (e.g., students, families, teachers, and staff), and/or who are impacted by them. Engagement with youth, particularly those at risk, will be central to this community engagement process.
2. Those involved in building partnerships and/or providing MHSSA services (e.g., grant staff, clinicians, peers and family advocates, and administrators).
3. Users of the evaluation findings (e.g., policy makers, grantees, and local and state agencies).

Community engagement will occur throughout the evaluation process, and during the first phase will focus on evaluation planning—developing a theory of change model, research questions, an evaluation framework, and process and outcomes measures.

The development of community engagement activities will be guided by several questions:

- 1) Does evaluation planning use principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- 2) How will we build a table that is big enough for and accessible to all relevant community partners?
- 3) Will the structure and process of events and meetings allow for all voices to be considered and valued equally?
- 4) Is the evaluation planning oriented to the needs of students, families, and grantees in addition to policymakers and the legislative requirements?

The following sections outline keys strategies and high-level plans for engagement.

Engage a Broad Audience For Evaluation Planning and Design

We propose engaging a broad audience to receive input on key research questions to guide the evaluation and consider meaningful performance measures to shed light on the impact of MHSSA school-county partnerships. We intend to reach students, parents and caregivers, MHSSA grantees and their partners, clinicians, teachers and staff,

community-based organizations, policy makers, and other State and local leaders through the following strategies:

1. Hold data forums to solicit a broad range of feedback to guide MHSSA evaluation questions and the development of MHSSA performance metrics and a monitoring system.
2. Facilitate listening sessions with targeted groups (e.g., students, parents and caregivers, teachers, staff, clinical providers, and members of the community) to hear about what is currently working in their schools, where there are still unmet needs, and what are meaningful measures of student success and well-being.
3. Visit school sites and hold virtual meetings to learn more about local MHSSA partnerships and activities from those providing and receiving services, what is working well and where are their challenges, and how to best measure success.
4. Leverage the Commission's Committees and Workgroups to host panels and provide a forum for public consideration and input on the evaluation.
5. Leverage MHSSA Collaboration Meetings to collect information from grantees on their program goals, metrics, and desired outcomes, as well as implementation successes, barriers, and challenges.
6. Establish other lines of communication such as an evaluation project email address and webpage on the Commission's website for stakeholders to learn of project activities and provide input outside of attending data forums and listening sessions.