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Effective School Solutions Releases National Best Practices Blueprint to Improve Youth Mental Health in Next Five Years

With 90% of school administrators and nearly 60% of parents reporting there is a growing youth mental health crisis, new blueprint will guide improvement in student mental health outcomes

New Providence, N.J. — [**Effective School Solutions**](#) (ESS) – the leading provider of school-based mental health services for K-12 school districts – today released a new [**six-point national policy blueprint**](#) for in-school mental health services for districts, states, and federal policymakers to reinvent and improve mental health over the next five years. The blueprint provides clinically-supported guidelines to implement and incentivize nationally standardized school-based mental health best practices, improved data collection to measure the efficacy of these programs, and recommendations for increased funding to sustain these services long term.

Youth mental health has been declining for the [**past decade**](#), but the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these conditions to epidemic levels. Nearly [**three-quarters**](#) of U.S. high school students reported experiencing at least one adverse childhood experience during the pandemic, and 60% of administrators say student mental health has worsened since COVID. Even as mental health conditions intensify for young people, districts continue to face significant hurdles when enacting mental health programs. According to national [**polling**](#) commissioned by Effective School Solutions, schools struggle with early identification of students with mental health challenges (52%), staffing (50%), and funding (47%), with this final factor heightened by the 2024 expiration of COVID relief funds schools have relied on to power mental health efforts. Current national school-based mental health programming lacks cohesive design, implementation, and measurement, which perpetuates worsening youth mental health.

“One of the legacies of the pandemic is the recognition that school districts play a critical role in the delivery of mental health care for young people. To help our kids and families, schools and policymakers need a standardized framework to support the long-term success of in-school mental health programs,” said Duncan Young, CEO of Effective School Solutions. “Our new national blueprint is a step toward more accountability and improved student wellbeing. Districts nationwide now have a clear roadmap for effective program design and early identification, access to sustainable funding streams, and methods to measure program success.”

The national blueprint, “Will to Wellness,” details six data-driven and evidence-based recommendations to help districts, states, and federal policymakers deliver high-quality school-based services for the long term. Released ahead of the three-year anniversary of the start of the pandemic, the blueprint provides districts with a best practices toolkit to better understand what they need to do to impact student mental health and how to do it, ensuring all students have access to top-tier mental health clinicians and preventative programming.

The blueprint includes the following key points that districts, states, and federal policymakers should focus on to improve wellness for all students:

- Develop and implement better systems and guidelines for early identification of students with mental health challenges.
- Achieve consistent adherence to the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model for school-based mental health care delivery.
- Develop and implement guidelines, systems, and processes for data collection, and progress monitoring of school based mental health initiatives.
- Build mental health awareness capacity among adults in school communities.
- Create sustainable funding for school-based mental health initiatives.
- Ensure all students in need have access to top-tier mental health clinicians.

“To tackle the student mental health crisis, school and policy leaders across the country need to be on the same page. A national framework of evidenced-based in-school mental health programs and policies is an essential part of the way forward,” said Co-founder of The Kennedy Forum Amy Kennedy. “A child’s mental health impacts their ability to learn and grow at the most fundamental level, and it’s critical high-quality resources reach every student in America. As an educator and mental health advocate, I extend my fullest support for the adoption of these best practices.”

“Our students, both in Newington and nationwide, deserve the best quality mental health care. While providing these services has been a priority for districts, what these services should look like and how they should be implemented has remained ambiguous,” said Director of Student Services for Newington Public Schools Marilena Guliso. “This new policy blueprint is exactly the kind of resource districts need to meet the moment. We will be referencing this document in our planning for the upcoming school year, and encourage other districts to do the same.”

“This blueprint couldn’t have come at a better time to support those of us on the front lines of the youth mental health crisis. As many COVID relief programs and funding for school mental health services are set to expire, we need a plan for how best to support and fund programs that directly support the needs and students of our district,” said Superintendent of Steelton-Highspire School District Mick Iskrice, Jr. “Our district views mental health support as a foundation in helping our students reach their fullest potential. These best practices and policy recommendations will help schools implement and sustain clinically-supported mental health services for the foreseeable future.”

Today’s announcement follows the release of Effective School Solutions’ [funding guide](#) and consulting service to help schools maximize state, federal, and other funding resources for student mental health care. To learn more about Effective School Solutions and view the national policy blueprint, please visit: www.effectiveschoolsolutions.com/.

About Effective School Solutions:

Effective School Solutions (ESS) is the country’s largest provider of school-based mental health care. The company partners with school districts to help them implement culturally-inclusive mental health and behavioral support programs proven to improve care, strengthen academics, address trauma, and maintain students in-district – helping every child reach their greatest potential. To learn more about Effective School Solutions, please visit: <https://www.effectiveschoolsolutions.com/>.

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