

# Cross-State Community of Practice

## Addressing Student Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

ED# 2020-R1-I-0007



### High-Leverage Problem

As schools were preparing to welcome students back to school for 2020–21 school year, Region 1 stakeholders consistently identified concerns related to student mental health. Specific concerns included increased anxiety, depression, and disengagement. In addition, most school staff lacked the necessary infrastructure—policies, resources, and staffing—to address these challenges. Given this situation, state education agency (SEA) staff were operating individually as a small team to develop plans and identify needed support. SEAs were looking for a more efficient process for learning about other state practices, understanding the evidence base supporting different interventions, and considering strategies for adoption. Furthermore, these teams were looking for an opportunity to build a community with colleagues across the region.

### Key Milestones

- Convened the SEA CoP and determined focus topics for the CoP sessions, in collaboration with NCSSLE.
- Organized and facilitated four CoP sessions.
- Curated and shared a resource of effective strategies for addressing social-emotional learning and mental health for SEA staff.



### R1CC Approach

The community of practice (CoP) facilitated a cross-regional SEA collaboration among peers to share effective strategies for supporting student mental health in their states. Participants engaged in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) reflection on their state's current mental health landscape. Subsequent meetings focused on priority topics determined through the initial meeting discussion and consultation with the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). During CoP meetings, NCSSLE provided information on the latest research and field practices focused on improving school climate and conditions for learning. NCSSLE provides training and support to grantees of the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program, the Trauma Recovery Demonstration Grant, and School-Based Mental Health Services grants.

**Key Partner(s):** Maine Department of Education, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, New Hampshire Department of Education, Vermont Agency of Education

## → Outputs

- Curated and compiled lists of available tools and resources targeted to the priority topic discussed during each CoP session:
  - *Resources for Identifying Student Mental Health Needs*
  - *Resources for Addressing Student Mental Health Needs*
  - *Resources for Funding Student Mental Health Supports*
- Documented SEA reflections on actions or strategies for implementing the identified strategies.

## Outcomes

*“We are extremely focused on anything that is evidence-based or promising practices, as that’s most often what is required through our federal grantees. And so, to be able to have those materials and be able to share them and utilize them, whether it be with my own team or with the school districts, helps give them a menu of what else is going on so that really was super helpful.”*