

Using GIS Mapping to Build and Strengthen Coherent Systems of Student Support



High-Leverage Problem

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has prioritized initiatives that help promote regional equity across the state. The AOE has been interested in using geographic information systems (GIS) data to support policymaking. The AOE requested using GIS to understand the landscape of student mental health support providers in schools and districts across the state. Data collected in previous years indicated a need for increased support services focused on student social, emotional, and mental health. Anticipating policies from the state legislature focused on this topic, the AOE wanted to understand where students can currently access mental health services and where additional supports may be needed. This project built on the Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) team's GIS mapping of preK data that was completed in Year 1 and updated in Year 2, contributing to a more systemic approach to understanding regional variation in resources to inform statewide policy.



R1CC Approach

This project builds on the work started in Year 1 to use GIS mapping as a tool to understand regional distribution of educational resources and the ways in which this distribution could inform policymaking. In Years 1 and 2, R1CC developed a preK GIS map that included both pre-COVID and post-COVID data to provide more accurate information on the availability of quality preK programs in the state. In Year 3, the R1CC team worked with the AOE and the Vermont Department of Mental Health (DMH) to collect data on student support staff employed by schools and districts, as well as staff contracted by schools and districts through the Success Beyond Six program. The R1CC team developed a map with a user-friendly interface that displays the number and type of mental health services and staff available in schools and districts and through regional resources. The map can be used to identify potential trends in the availability of mental health services for students across the state. This project is part of an ongoing collaboration between AOE and the R1CC team to identify areas of map expansion and to enhance the value of GIS mapping as a tool for decision-making.

● — ⊙ — ⊙ → Key Milestones

- Developed essential questions to guide the development of the GIS map of mental health resources and data sources
- Obtained and cleaned school-based student support staffing data and community-based services data
- Developed a GIS map that includes data on the number and type of mental-health-related staffing in individual K-12 public schools and districts throughout Vermont, shows the proximity of designated agency offices and related services, and displays data on mental-health-related staffing contracted through the designated agencies

Outputs

- List of data sources included in the GIS map of mental health resources
- GIS map showing the location of mental health services and resources

Outcomes

- The AOE shared that the map can be used by a cross-organizational group focused on Success Beyond Six, including members from the AOE and the Department of Mental Health, to identify patterns in the data



“I’m very pleased with the quality of the work and the definite interest in partnering with us at the state to actually get our take on things because I think that’s so critical.”

“The working relationship is great. I really enjoy working with the R1CC staff, and I think we’ll end up with a good product.”