RTI International has conducted research on crime, violence, justice systems, and behavioral health for over 30 years. Using rigorous multidisciplinary approaches, RTI research advances knowledge and informs policy, practice, and programs nationally and internationally.

Professional backgrounds of RTI researchers span a wide variety of disciplines including criminology, economics, law, psychology, public health, and sociology. Crime, violence, and justice staff are located in RTI’s main office in Research Triangle Park, NC, and in offices throughout the United States. RTI maintains a presence in Washington, DC, for consultation on crime, violence, justice, and behavioral health topics.

**Overview**

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative, funded by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice, is an ambitious federal effort to improve the health and well-being of children and adolescents. The Initiative focuses on integrated prevention and treatment programs, strategies, and services designed to reduce violence and substance use among children, promote mental health, and enhance school safety. The SS/HS Initiative has awarded competitive grants to between 20 and 54 sites each year beginning in 1999.

RTI is using two approaches to evaluate this Initiative: conducting a comprehensive cross-site evaluation and supporting consortia of local evaluators who conduct independent evaluations. The goal of these complementary evaluation strategies is to assess the effectiveness of collaborative community efforts to promote safe schools and facilitate healthy child and adolescent development.

**Approaches**

In the Cross-site Evaluation, RTI and its subcontractor, RMC Research Corporation, are conducting both Process and Outcome Evaluations across the 97 sites funded during the first 3 years of the initiative:

- **The Process Evaluation** (1) provides information on how the Initiative was implemented, (2) gives insight into site attributes and procedures that appear to enhance or impede implementation, (3) examines SS/HS partnership formation and functioning, and the development of policies and provision of services, and (4) helps with the interpretation of findings from the Outcome Evaluation by providing information on why change or lack of change was observed in certain outcomes.

- **The Outcome Evaluation** assesses (1) specific outcomes important to the Initiative, (2) whether outcomes change over time, and (3) the association between key outcomes and planning, programs, and other activities in SS/HS Initiative schools and communities.

The SS/HS Cross-site Evaluation is based on a two-tiered approach: (1) a broad study of all 97 study sites, including annual surveys of teachers, school principals, other school staff, district representatives, partnership members, and (continued)
Evaluation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (continued)

Findings and Products Generated
SS/HS evaluations provide valuable information on multiple facets of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, including
- SS/HS partnerships characteristics and effectiveness
- School violence and school safety
- Student substance use/abuse
- School climate
- Mental health services
- Early childhood services
- Cost analysis of local SS/HS Initiative services
- Case studies of individual SS/HS Initiative grantees

In addition to stand-alone reports on each of the above, RTI is preparing a comprehensive final report that will integrate cross-site evaluation findings.

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