

# **Setting the Right Conditions for Learning**

**How State Leaders and Partners Can Work Together to Meet the Comprehensive Needs of Students**

**April 2019**



## THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions.

CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress and the public.

### **Setting the Right Conditions for Learning**

### **How State Leaders and Partners Can Work Together to Meet the Comprehensive Needs of Students**

#### COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

Pedro Rivera (Pennsylvania), President

Carissa Moffat Miller, Executive Director

We are grateful to our partners at [Education First](#) for their help in developing this guide.

Council of Chief State School Officers  
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20001-1431  
Phone (202) 336-7000  
Fax (202) 408-8072  
[www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)



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# Contents

- A Message from CCSSO Board President Pedro Rivera ..... 4
- Overview ..... 5
- Conditions for Learning ..... 5
- State Implementation ..... 7
- State Best Practices..... 9
  - Food Security ..... 9
  - Health and Wellness ..... 12
  - Mental Health ..... 13
  - Homelessness ..... 16
- Resources ..... 18

## A Message from CCSSO Board President Pedro Rivera

Dear Colleagues,

A commitment to educational equity is a fundamental part of who I am and how I came to be the Secretary of Education for the state of Pennsylvania. Being a first-generation college student, I was enamored by the opportunity to learn in a post-secondary institution. While in college, I became a tutor for a local high school and my experience working with those students propelled me to become an educator myself. That decision gave me the opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of children while I worked in the classroom, in the superintendent's office and now as Secretary.

Ensuring that the needs of every child are met—equity in education—is essential and a critical part of the work that the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is committed to leading. In February 2017, CCSSO and The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program published *Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs*, a series of actions states can take to advance equity for all students. Our pursuit of equity is particularly urgent for students who grow up in poverty and endure a disproportionate exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

One of the actions state chiefs can take is to create and cultivate conditions for learning that students need to thrive academically. Creating these conditions requires a focus on the whole child, including on issues students face outside of school that can impact their learning: food security, physical health and wellness, mental health and homelessness.

A deliberate partnership between state chiefs, state leaders and community organizations to directly address these four areas can help ensure that students are better positioned to succeed and their families are better positioned to support them. Meeting these basic needs can help increase the likelihood that students come to school nourished, physically and mentally healthy and free from the stress of worrying about where they will sleep.

Through this report, we are sharing promising practices from around the country to elevate our efforts, provide state chiefs with suggested ways they can improve the conditions for learning in their states and create equitable opportunities for all students to achieve academic success. Throughout the year we will release additional state examples and resources and provide states with support to implement new strategies to address the challenges facing their students.

No one state education agency can improve the conditions for learning alone. Resolving the issues that our students face outside of the classroom will require deliberate partnerships, stakeholder engagement and a continued focus on equity. These partnerships will equip state leaders with the resources, tools and supports they need to successfully integrate strategies to improve conditions for learning in state policy and practice with the goal of ultimately improving outcomes for all students.

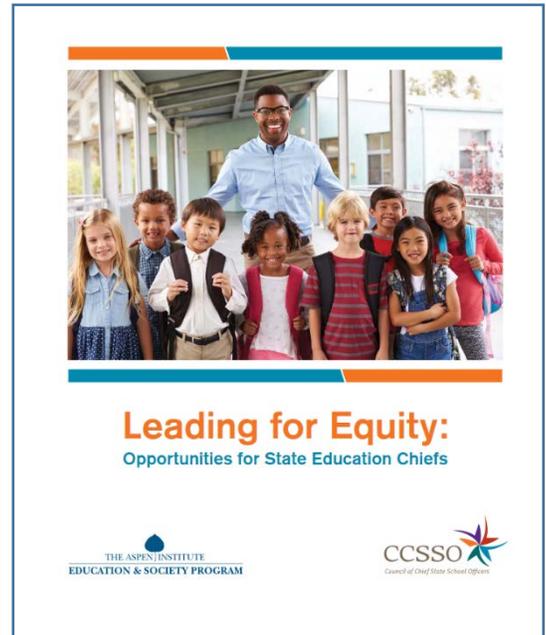
Sincerely,

Pedro Rivera  
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education

## Overview

American public education policy and practice has long focused on what can be done to meet the academic needs of all students during the school day. Today, more families and students are facing challenges outside of school that affect student academic performance in classrooms. Challenges such as **homelessness, food security, mental health and general health and well-being** can adversely affect a student's ability to come to school on time, every day, ready to learn. These types of challenges can be addressed by state education agencies (SEAs) when they partner with other systemic, state and community partners that are working to address these challenges daily.

In February 2017, CCSSO and The Aspen Education and Society Program published *Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs*, outlining actions states can take to advance equity for every student. The report notes that students who live in poverty are more likely to experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—which can include stressful or traumatic events, abuse and neglect increasing the need to provide them with additional levels of support. When ACEs are addressed and—if possible, resolved—for students, they are better able to thrive academically. CCSSO sought to help state education agencies (SEAs) understand how they can partner with community organizations and systemic partners working in the fields of food security, physical health and wellness, mental health and homelessness to lessen the effects of ACEs for students and ensure they have the supports they need to thrive. Taken together, CCSSO Board of Directors President Pedro Rivera has focused his platform on improving conditions for learning.



This document reflects what improving those conditions looks like in practice and profiles promising examples across the country where states have taken action to maximize academic outcomes for students. These promising examples are intended to provide ideas and inspiration to spur other states to explore new partnerships with state-level organizations such as state health departments and social services, to seek new approaches to policy and consider how to use existing funding to improve the conditions for learning for all students.

## Conditions for Learning

This document is arranged by the four conditions for learning outlined below. Within each condition there are several state examples of successful and promising practices and related questions for consideration for states to discuss before implementation.

The four categories that CCSSO is focused on are:



### Food Security



Hunger-related toxic stress can negatively affect brain development, learning, information processing and academic achievement in children. The stress caused by food insecurity has physiological effects on the development of children’s brains and limits the amount of “cognitive bandwidth” that children can spend on schoolwork. According to the American Psychological Association, people tend to spend their limited mental reserves on resources that they lack and so hungry children often focus on food, which can lead to neglect of other areas of life such as schoolwork.

### Health and Wellness



The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that less than one-quarter of children between the ages of six and 19 in the United States are sufficiently active. Lack of physical activity increases the risk of physical challenges for students such as high-blood pressure and childhood obesity. A lack of physical activity also creates cognitive challenges for students such as lower impulse control and a lowered ability to concentrate and remember information. Helping children and adolescents maintain good physical health increases their ability to perform at a higher level in school.

### Mental Health



CCSSO’s 2017 Leading for Equity report highlighted the disproportionality of adverse childhood experiences that children in poverty endure. The APA’s focus on the intersection between socioeconomic status and psychology reports that “Children living in poverty score lower on tests of cognitive development, complete fewer years of schooling and are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety, depression and ADHD.” The increased chances for students to develop mental health issues increases the challenges that can negatively impact their learning.

### Homelessness



The challenges of homelessness affect over 1.3 million students annually. Homeless students have significantly lower graduation rates than their housed, low-income peers, as well as higher rates of school suspension and chronic absenteeism. Homelessness is also typically intertwined with hunger, violence, mental health issues such as suicide, depression and anxiety, and poor physical health.

## State Implementation

The state examples on the following pages should serve as inspiration for what is possible when SEAs, state agencies and community partners work together to serve a common mission of ensuring equitable outcomes for the students in their states. School leaders and educators can certainly take some steps to promote these conditions—such as offering Breakfast in the Classroom—but do not have the capacity, resources or training to take on all of the challenges surrounding each of the conditions. By focusing on these conditions for learning and implementing efforts such as the ones detailed below, state chiefs will be better positioned to advance their commitment of educating all students equitably.

To determine which conditions to prioritize and which strategies make the most sense for your states, SEAs are encouraged to consider and discuss questions related to **State Context, State Strategy, Opportunities for Partnerships, Capacity and Funding**.

These discussions should be wide-reaching, transparent, informed by data, and include input from stakeholders. Consider these questions:

### **Student Need and State Context**

- How many students qualify for this type of support?
- Where are they clustered in the highest numbers? Does the data regarding the number of students that qualify for this type of support illustrate a high need in certain areas, i.e., rural, urban, suburban?
- Disaggregate the data to help identify the different needs of different demographic communities. How does the trend in data demonstrate the urgency of addressing this condition in your state?
- What is the impact of not addressing the need on student achievement?

### **State Strategy**

- How does addressing this condition fit into the state's strategic plan? If not, how could it be built into the state's next plan?
- How does addressing this condition address the state's commitment to equity?
- What has been done in the past to address these issues?
- What successful foundations exist that could be scaled up?
- What hasn't worked? Why?

### **Opportunities for Partnerships**

- What legislative options exist to support implementation and fill in any gaps left by federal programs?
- What other stakeholders do you need to build relationships with and what role could they play?
- What statewide, regional coalitions, or leading nonprofit organizations exist that could be potential partners in this effort?

### **Capacity**

- Where will this effort be situated within the SEA's current structure?
- Who will lead the work? How could this effort be integrated into existing roles or responsibilities without creating the need for additional staff?

- Are there enough trained people in the state or region to address the conditions for learning? What training will be needed? What outreach will need to be done to build capacity?
- What pilot efforts can be put into place immediately for the highest need communities?

### **Funding**

- What funding sources are available?
- How can ESSA funds be used to jumpstart the launch of one of these programs?
- What are the barriers to implementation and what can be done to overcome them?
- What funding streams exist to sustain this effort over time?

# State Best Practices

## Food Security



### STRATEGY 1: Serve breakfast after the bell

Students can't learn if they come to school hungry, making breakfast a critical part of every day. Unfortunately, many families are unable to provide breakfast for their children each morning, prompting students to either skip it entirely or to eat less than nutritious foods before first period. But through the support of innovative state policies and partnerships with nonprofits and community organizations, many states are addressing this challenge by providing students with a healthy breakfast after school begins. Traditional models of serving breakfast in the cafeteria before the start of the school day have proven less than effective—not everyone can get there early enough, the paperwork can be cumbersome and some students simply opt not to go to avoid the stigma—prompting states to pursue new avenues to ensuring all kids start the day with a healthy meal.

Breakfast in the Classroom	Grab and Go Breakfast	Second Chance Breakfast
Students or staff deliver breakfasts to classrooms from the cafeteria via coolers or insulated rolling bags.	Students pick up packaged breakfasts from mobile service carts in high traffic areas such as hallways, entryways or cafeterias. Students can eat in their classroom before and after the bell has rung.	Students can eat breakfast during a break in the morning, often between first and second period or midway between breakfast and lunch. Schools can serve breakfast as a Grab and Go option, or reopen the cafeterias to serve breakfast.

Source: [No Kid Hungry](#), 2018

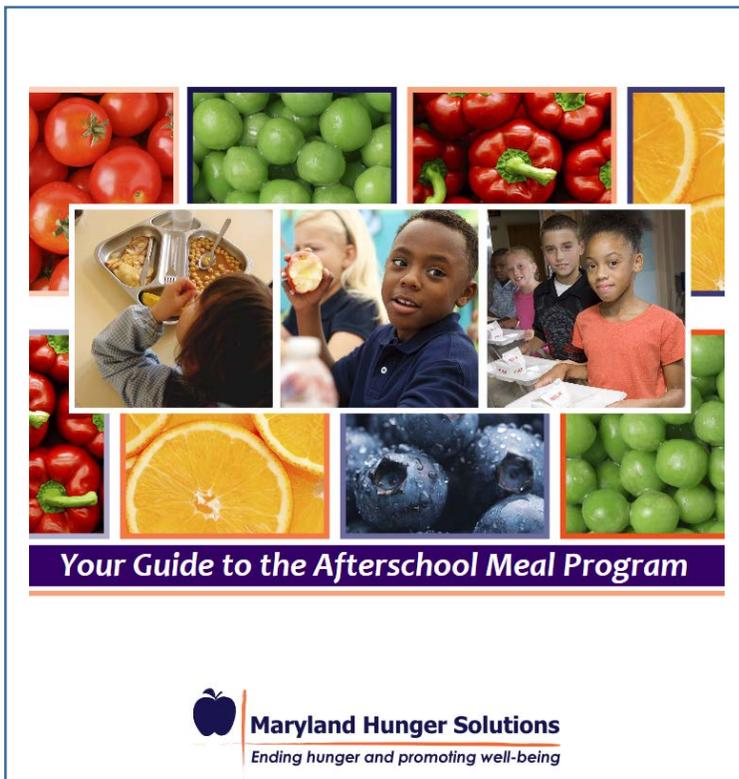
Newer models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom, Breakfast after the Bell and Grab N' Go Breakfast break these traditional molds and help to make breakfast more a part of the school day. State education agencies have enabled the implementation of these programs in a range of ways, including:

- States including **Connecticut**, **Colorado** and **California** make funds available to high need schools to supplement the initial implementation costs.
- In 2015 former **Massachusetts** Commissioner Mitchell Chester agreed to allow breakfast in the classroom to count toward each school's required number of structured learning time hours so long as a teacher is present and instruction is taking place.
- **Maryland** has supported Maryland Meals for Achievement since 1998, allowing schools with at least 40 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals to apply to implement a universal classroom breakfast program. State funding enables schools to cover the lost revenue associated with serving free meals to students who qualify for reduced- or full-price meals.
- **California** Senator Mike McGuire introduced a bill in 2019 to provide schools with an extra 10 cents per breakfast reimbursement to incent them to purchase California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables. To qualify for the "California Grown Healthy Kids Act" incentive, school districts must serve free breakfast to all students in all schools and serve both free breakfast and lunch at very high poverty schools.

- In **Pennsylvania**, the Governor’s School Breakfast Initiative, first introduced as part of the 2017–18 state budget, awards grants of up to \$5,000 for schools to implement a breakfast program using an alternative serving method, like Grab N’ Go Breakfast, or Breakfast in the Classroom. Schools can also expand an existing program to include an alternative serving method. Breakfast must be made available to all students in a school. The initiative is part of a comprehensive strategy.

**STRATEGY 2: Serve meals after school**

**Maryland** is one of the few states in the country to implement an Afterschool Meal Program. The program helps LEAs provide nutritious meals after school to children throughout the school year. A 2012 study by the Food Research and Action Center found that one in six Maryland



households with children did not have enough money to buy food that their family needed. This program is intended to address that need and to ensure that students are able to have three solid meals each day before going home. It is made possible by funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The meals meet USDA guidelines and typically consist of milk, fruits and vegetables, meat or meat alternative and grains. To be eligible, schools, public agencies and other non-profit and some for-profit institutions must be located in an area where at least 50 percent of enrolled students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches, provide enrichment activities such as homework assistance and tutoring. Students who are served must be 18 or younger at the start of the school year and the

after-school program must meet state and local health and safety requirements. Each site has the choice of self-preparing food or having a vendor deliver fully prepped meals each day.

**STRATEGY 3: Make nourishment an intervention strategy**

**Oklahoma** officials identified nutrition as a key academic intervention strategy in their state’s ESSA plan. Noting that one in four students in Oklahoma struggle with hunger, the state set a bold goal of increasing access to child nutrition by removing barriers to participation in federal food and nutrition programs. The state plan called for increased participation in school programs such as Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Breakfast in the Classroom and summer meals programs across the state, particularly in rural areas with minimal access to existing programs.

### STRATEGY 4: Eliminate the reduced-price category for low income students

Officials in **Vermont** have found that one way to increase student participation in school breakfast and lunch programs is to eliminate the reduced-price category and offer the meals at no cost to those who qualify. Nationally children in households with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free school meals and children in households with incomes between 130 to 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price school meals and can be charged no more than 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch. But maintaining a reduced-price model comes with challenges: Students from low income families can still struggle to make these payments and schools face the burdensome administrative challenges of tracking which students qualify, collecting payments and ensuring delinquent accounts are repaid. In many cases student participation is lower when they qualify for reduced price meals and participation tends to decline even further toward the end of each month. Vermont eliminated the cost to families who meet the qualifications for reduced-price school meals and instead reimburses school meal programs the 30 cents per breakfast and 40 cents per lunch not covered by the USDA reduced-price reimbursement rate. This allows all children from households at or below 185% of the poverty rate to eat school meals for free. All other families pay the full price for their children school meals, as set by their local School Board.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES [Effective from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019]											
Household size	Federal poverty guidelines	Reduced Price Meals—185%					Free Meals—130%				
		Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly
	Annual										
<b>48 Contiguous States, District of Columbia, Guam, and Territories</b>											
1 .....	12,140	22,459	1,872	936	864	432	15,782	1,316	658	607	304
2 .....	16,460	30,451	2,538	1,269	1,172	586	21,398	1,784	892	823	412
3 .....	20,780	38,443	3,204	1,602	1,479	740	27,014	2,252	1,126	1,039	520
4 .....	25,100	46,435	3,870	1,935	1,786	893	32,630	2,720	1,360	1,255	628
5 .....	29,420	54,427	4,536	2,268	2,094	1,047	38,246	3,188	1,594	1,471	736
6 .....	33,740	62,419	5,202	2,601	2,401	1,201	43,862	3,656	1,828	1,687	844
7 .....	38,060	70,411	5,868	2,934	2,709	1,355	49,478	4,124	2,062	1,903	952
8 .....	42,380	78,403	6,534	3,267	3,016	1,508	55,094	4,592	2,296	2,119	1,080
For each add'l family member, add .....	4,320	7,992	666	333	308	154	5,616	468	234	216	108

Source: Office of the Federal Register, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/05/08/2018-09679/child-nutrition-programs-income-eligibility-guidelines>

### STRATEGY 5: Provide free meals to all students

The **Hawaii** State Department of Education is continuing the expansion of a USDA program that provides free meals for all students regardless of the families' socio-economic status. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Pilot Program began in 2015 with seven schools and expanded to 52 schools in the 2017–18 school year. The program provides benefits to students that relieve the stress of any stigma for receiving a free lunch, they spend more time eating their meals instead of standing in line and there is no worry of having cash or not having money on an account. The program has provided 18,000 students and their families relief from the threat of hunger.

## Health and Wellness



### **STRATEGY 1: Offer menus and even recipes that meet nutrition guidelines**

**Iowa** has taken steps to not only encourage schools to serve nutritious meals to all students, but to actually provide them with the recipes to do so. In 2012 the Iowa Department of Education used a Team Nutrition training grant from USDA to develop and publish “Gold Star” breakfast and lunch menus for schools to use to develop their weekly meal plans. Each meal includes healthy foods and USDA-approved amounts of calories, nutrients and grains. The Iowa website also includes other recipe resources: Take n’ Talk menus that have full reimbursement meals with a choice of milk, USDA Foods Recipes developed by a chef who worked with the Iowa USDA Foods Advisory Council to develop and standardize the 10 recipes, and a collection of Smart Snack Recipes that can be sold to students during the school day as they meet the USDA Smart Snack nutrition standards.

### **STRATEGY 2: Make health and wellness a statewide priority**

In 2018, **Oklahoma** launched Project Get Fit! with the Department of Health to increase health and wellness for students across the state, with a particular focus on five high need communities. Funded by a \$1.825 million grant from the CDC, the program was designed to improve student access to nutrition, increase physical education opportunities, establish outdoor open-access food pantries and increase access to case management services for students with chronic health conditions. The program will also provide professional development and resources to support practices to promote healthy schools. More than 4,000 students and more than 500 teachers will benefit from this initiative.

### **STRATEGY 3: Leverage federal funding to provide students with health services**

The **Pennsylvania** Departments of Education and Human Services partner on health and mental health funding and service initiatives throughout the Commonwealth. The Office of Social Programs within the state of Pennsylvania operates the Medicaid School-Based ACCESS Program (SBAP) in partnership with the Department of Education. Since 1992, the ACCESS program provides local education agencies with the opportunity to receive federal reimbursement through the Medicaid program for health-related services that are documented within the Individual Education Program (IEP) plans for students enrolled in Medicaid. Funds may be used to support the education of any special education student, not only those who are Medicaid eligible. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has partnered with the Department of Education to identify and support the use of funds to be utilized onsite within schools and include services such as school based mental health clinicians, community health workers, school-based health clinics and innovative behavioral health programs designed to meet local school and community needs.

## Mental Health



### **STRATEGY 1: Build awareness of and capacity to address mental health issues**

The 2016 **Louisiana** Caring Communities Youth Survey reflected an increased need for mental health services in Louisiana youth in grades 6–12, with the largest increase at 3 percent amongst Louisiana’s high school seniors. With this data in hand and the need to improve a number of struggling schools in response to ESSA requirements, the Louisiana Department of Education sought help to address the mental health gaps in its systems. In September 2018, the Louisiana DOE was awarded the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Project AWARE grant to help schools better serve students who have experienced trauma. Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) is a competitive federal grant open to state education agencies for the purpose of building or expanding the capacity of SEAs to increase students’ awareness of mental health issues; provide training for educators to help them detect and respond to mental health issues; and connect students and their families to support services. The Louisiana DOE, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health, will use the \$9 million grant (\$1.8 million over five years) to establish the statewide Louisiana School Mental Health Support Program and will prioritize serving 34 schools across three school systems with a particular emphasis on alternative school settings.

### **STRATEGY 2: Create legislation and guidance to address youth suicide**

In 2014, **Pennsylvania** passed Act 71, a law requiring schools to adopt a youth suicide awareness and prevention policy, provide training for teachers and to share model policies and curriculum to support implementation. According to the details of the law, as of the start of the 2015–16 school year, all schools were required to adopt an “age appropriate” youth suicide awareness and prevention policy and make it publicly available to staff and parents, build four hours of training in suicide awareness and prevention into their professional development plan every five years for educators serving students in grades 6–12, and to incorporate a youth suicide

awareness and prevention curriculum into existing instructional programs. Under the law, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDOE) is to work with youth suicide prevention organizations to develop and make publicly available a model youth suicide awareness and prevention policy and a model youth suicide awareness and prevention curriculum. PDOE has posted the law, model policies and materials and links to state and national resources to support training of educators and guidance for students. Prevent Suicide PA has also published lists of resources for schools and districts to consider in developing their own curricula and policies.



#### **Act 71, Youth Suicide Education Awareness and Prevention Model Curriculum**

##### Introduction

The following is offered as a model curriculum which can be used in classrooms, or for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to utilize in development of a curriculum to meet the needs of the learning goals for their students.

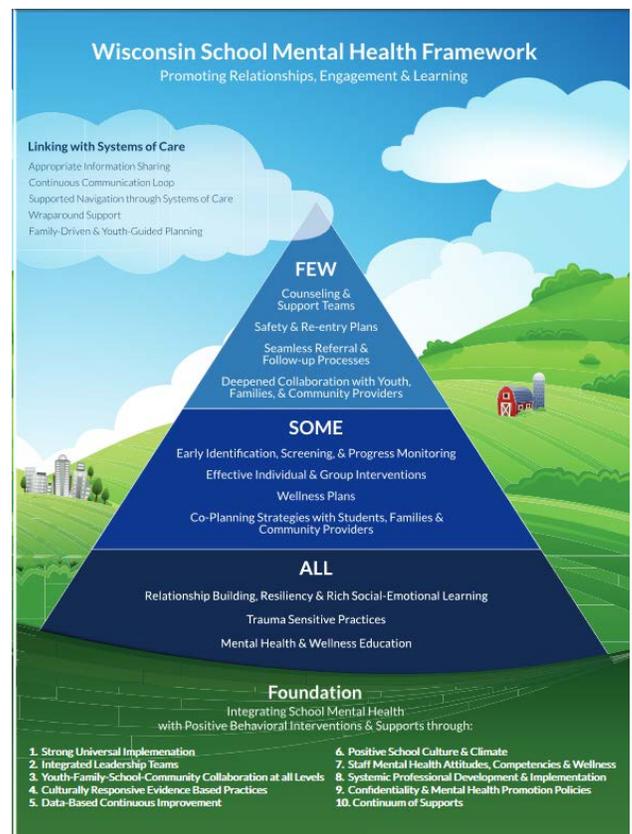
Youth suicide education is not a quick study. This is not a one or two day, one book, and one time assembly topic. Time allocated for instruction should be incorporated into the regular curriculum for meeting the Pennsylvania Academic Standards. The LEAs must use their

### STRATEGY 3: Launch and lead a statewide conversation

According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education, **Oklahoma** ranks “in the nation’s top 10 in teen birth rate, children in poverty, infant mortality and childhood obesity.” To help address some of the root causes of these negative statistics, the state convened educators, community members and other stakeholders for its first trauma summit, *It Starts Here: Trauma-Informed Instruction*. During this initial convening, attendees heard from experts about strategies and tools they could use to connect with children who had experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs. The Oklahoma SDE is continuing its efforts to help schools better serve their students as it relates to mental health concerns. In a follow-up convening, *Continuing the Conversation: Trauma-Informed Instruction*, educators met to discuss the impact of trauma and stress on learning and the importance of positive student-teacher relationships. Educators were introduced to the Child-Adult Relationship Enhancement (CARE™) framework, an evidence-based program that provides educators and other adults serving children who have experienced ACEs with a set of tools and skills to help connect and enhance their relationships. Since 2006, more than 2,000 educators, child welfare and mental health professionals and caregivers across the nation have received CARE training. In Oklahoma, the CARE initiative is going statewide and more educators will receive training to help them better connect with their most at-risk students.

### STRATEGY 4: Create a statewide Mental Health Framework

The **Wisconsin** Department of Public Instruction developed a mental health framework for district leaders to use to define the foundational mental health and wellness supports all communities need to have in place and sustain necessary school mental health systems. The Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework provides key elements to implement comprehensive school mental health systems in districts and schools across the state and spotlights best practices and community partnerships that are already in place and having an impact. This Framework, released in 2015, is based on one of the key goals in the state’s strategic plan: “All Wisconsin children will graduate from high school academically prepared and socially and emotionally competent...These proficiencies/attributes come from rigorous, rich, and well-rounded school experiences.” The Framework is designed to encourage schools to integrate mental health and wellness supports into their school day, creating multilevel system of supports (MLSS) for the students who need them. Districts are encouraged to partner with community mental health providers, and to co-develop their local programs with the input of families to ensure the unique needs of all students can be met. In addition, the State of Wisconsin appropriated funds for the School Mental Health Services grant program which supports schools in collaborating with community mental health providers to provide comprehensive wellness and mental health services to children and youth.



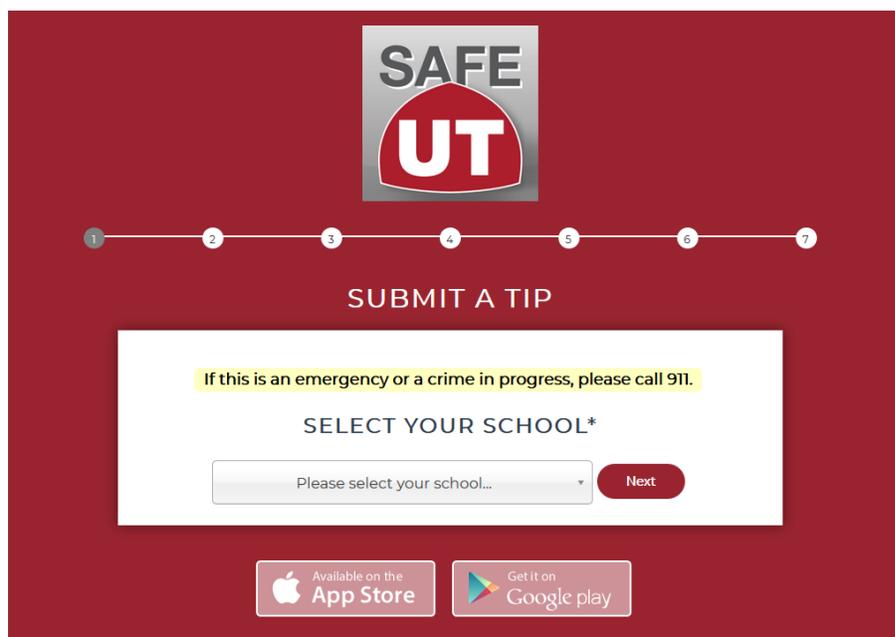
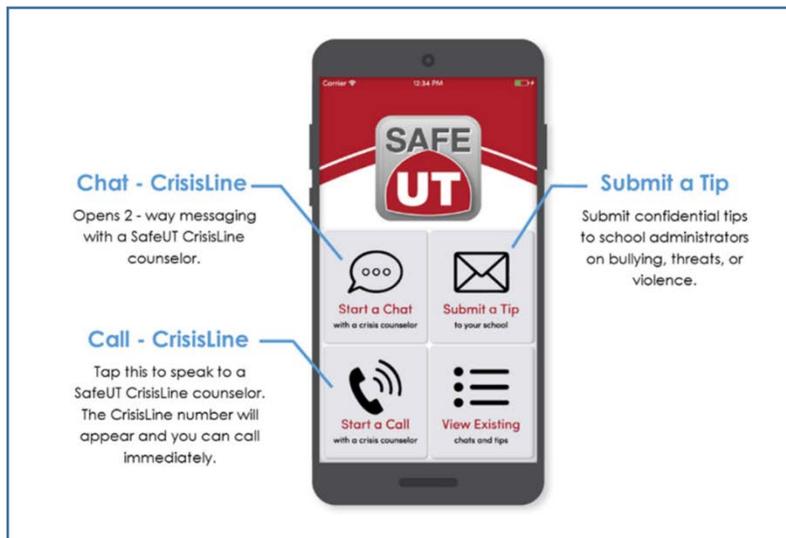
## STRATEGY 5: Create an easy-to-use crisis intervention tool

Utah education, higher education, legislative and law enforcement authorities partnered in 2016 to launch the SafeUT Crisis and Safety Tipline for the state's students. This came at a time when suicide rates for Utah's youth rose to an alarmingly high rate, creating a clear need for

services to support crisis intervention and the mental health of students. In fact, Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes said in a 2016 announcement that the tool was "designed to create a lifeline to students who feel they have nowhere else to turn and that life is not worth living anymore." SafeUT was developed as a mobile app, creating a confidential and anonymous two-way communications tool for students to connect directly with crisis counselors and school staff day or night. The app connects students to a crisis line where they can talk to a licensed clinician directly,

or gives the option of connecting via text message or submitting a tip over email; a telephone line is also available for students without smartphones. School districts across the state were provided with detailed guidance including materials to share with teachers and parents. Originally concentrated in public high schools and middle schools, SafeUT has expanded to include private schools, charter schools and all eight state-funded higher education institutions in Utah. As of 2018, SafeUT

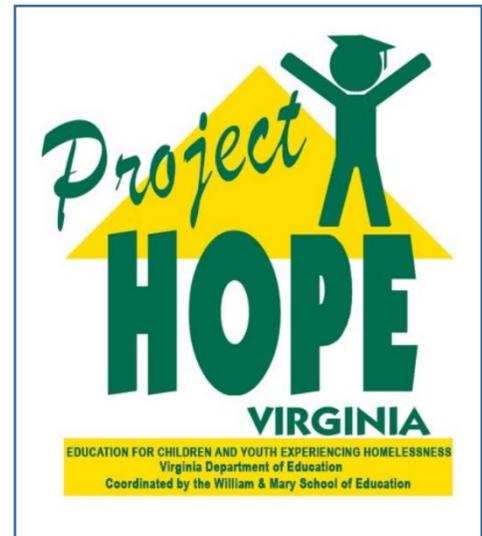
covers nearly 82 percent of Utah students, including 100 percent of public K12 and higher education students. Each school was asked to identify up to three contacts to complete a training and to be responsible for responding to inquiries, texts and crisis situations regarding their students. Since July 2017, SafeUT has received nearly 20,000 chats and almost 15,000 tips from students across the state. The app's creators are currently working on a way for school administrators to have access to their school's data to assess trends and align services to the needs identified in the data.





**STRATEGY 1: Address the academic needs of students experiencing homelessness**

In **Virginia**, the number of students identified as homeless has grown by 106 percent since 2006, which tracks with the nation-wide trend. The Virginia Department of Education is combating this trend through Project HOPE-Virginia. Project HOPE-Virginia is coordinated by the William & Mary School of Education. The office of the state coordinator is funded through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Project HOPE-Virginia helps the commonwealth’s 132 school divisions meet the needs of homeless students and their families by providing support and technical assistance to school divisions that provide early childhood education, mentoring, tutoring, parent education, summer enrichment and domestic violence prevention. Project HOPE-Virginia’s effectiveness is cited as contributing to a 12-point increase in the graduation rate for homeless students in the commonwealth, from 58 percent in 2008, to 70 percent in 2018. In addition, the National Center for Homeless Education reports that Virginia is one of only four states where 50 percent or more of homeless students achieve passing scores on statewide assessments in reading, mathematics and science.



**STRATEGY 2: Award grants to support communities serving high numbers of homeless students**

**New York** education officials at the New York State Education Department administer a competitive application process to provide districts with three-year supplemental grants to support the success of students experiencing homelessness. The minimum number of students required for the baseline grant is 100; smaller districts need to apply as a consortium to reach the minimum of 100 students who are experiencing homelessness to qualify. There are baseline funding grants and enhanced grants available for trauma-sensitive schools. The baseline funding grant is meant to supplement the basic McKinney-Vento Act requirements: identification, enrollment, and/or transportation to and from school. The supplemental expenses can include tutoring or supplemental instruction, before and after school

**FUNDING – awards**

**Baseline Grant**

- **100 - 200** students identified- **\$45,000** per year for 3 years
- **201- 300** students identified - **\$55,000** per year for 3 years
- **301- 600** students identified - **\$65,000** per year for 3 years
- **601 -1000** students identified - **\$80,000** per year for 3 years
- **1001- 2000** students identified - **\$100,000** per year for 3 years
- **2001- 4000** students identified - **\$125,000** per year for 3 years
- LEAs/consortia with **>4,000** students identified as homeless may request a maximum total award of **\$2.5 million** per year for 3 years

**Enhanced Grant for Trauma-Sensitive Schools**

- Up to **\$20,000** per year for 3 years  
(in addition to the Baseline Grant)

activities and education and training for parents about educational rights and resources that are available to them. In addition to the baseline grant, LEAs can apply for an enhanced grant that allows them to secure funding to help them become more trauma-sensitive and operate in more trauma-informed ways. Students who are experiencing homelessness are more likely to have unique learning needs as a result of the trauma they experience. These unique learning needs require educators to use strategies that can mitigate the effects trauma has on student learning. As of the application deadline in December 2018, 48 baseline grants and 12 enhanced grants serving 137 unique LEAs have secured funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s “Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program” authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.

### **STRATEGY 3: Pass legislation to help homeless students access in-school supports**

During the 2015–16 school year, the state of **Washington** identified nearly 40,000 students experiencing homelessness. The state legislature passed the Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act (HSSA) in 2016 to help these students access in-school supports



and housing assistance. Through this program, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides \$830,000 worth of competitive grants to 12 school districts across the state. These funds help build capacity at the district level to improve identification, enhance services, and ultimately improve academic outcomes—particularly for unaccompanied, homeless youth. The other aim of this program, to provide housing assistance to students experiencing homelessness, is administered through the Department of Commerce, which provides \$1 million worth of competitive grants to schools that help connect students and their families with housing services in their communities.

### **STRATEGY 4: Train adults in the community to support homeless students and their families**

As an initiative for Homeless Awareness Month in November 2017, the **Washington, DC** Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE) Homeless Education Program launched the Ally Partner Homeless Awareness Program, which “provides greater access to resources and more supports for children and youth experiencing homelessness in the District of Columbia.” The Ally Partner program trains adults in LEAs and community organizations in the District to serve as liaisons to students and their families experiencing homelessness. These Allies can help students and families access services, resources and the assistance they need to provide some stability. Allies must be an OSSE employee, local education agency or school-based partner and agree to attend trainings offered through the National Center for Homeless Education and OSSE. The training that Allies receive is helpful to state education agencies for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and the awareness of homelessness is raised for Allies.

## Resources

- *Building Blocks for Learning Framework*, Turnaround for Children, 2016
- *Center for Optimized Student Supports*, City Connects
- *Creating Policies to Support Healthy Schools: Policymaker, Educator, and Student Perspectives*, Child Trends, 2019
- *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development*, Nation at Hope, 2019
- *Measuring School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning and Development: A Navigation Guide for States and Districts*, CCSSO, 2019
- *State School Health Policy Database*, NASBE, 2019
- *The Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) papers*, The Opportunity Institute, 2018
- *Using State Policy to Create Healthy Schools*, Child Trends, 2019
- *When Youth Feel Unsafe: Brief Insights on the Cognitive and Academic Effects of Exposure to Violence*, America's Promise, 2018

### Topic-Specific Resources



#### **Health and Wellness**

- *Every School Healthy Campaign*, America's Promise Alliance
- *Healthy Schools Campaign*
- *Iowa Team Nutrition Recipe Resources*, Iowa Department of Education, 2013
- *The Every Student Succeeds Act Creates Opportunities to Improve Health and Education at Low-Performing Schools*, Health Impact Project, 2017
- *Using Needs Assessments to Connect Learning and Health*, Healthy Schools Campaign, 2018



#### **Homelessness**

- *Education Leads Home*
- *Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools*, Civic Enterprises
- *Homeless Student State Snapshots*, Education Leads Home, 2019
- *Schoolhouse Connection*



#### **Food Security**

- *Breakfast in the Classroom*, Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom
- *Community Eligibility Provision Fact Sheet*, US Department of Agriculture, 2015
- *Community Eligibility Provision Resource Center*, US Department of Agriculture
- *Effective Policies for Increasing Participation in School Breakfast Programs*, No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices



#### **Mental Health**

- *The Missouri Model: A Developmental Framework for Trauma-Informed*, MO State Trauma Roundtable, 2015
- *SafeUT Crisis and Safety Tipline*, SafeUT, 2016
- *Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework*, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2015
- *Youth Suicide Prevention and Awareness Programs for Students*, Prevent Suicide PA, 2018

