



Safe
Schools
Healthy
Students

Planning a Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative in Your School and Community

Part of the SS/HS Framework Implementation Toolkit

1. Plan

2. Implement

3. Sustain and Expand

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Planning Guide

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Way

History of the Initiative



In 1999, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice embarked on a unique and unprecedented collaboration, creating the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) initiative in response to rising concerns about youth violence, substance abuse, and school safety. The designers of the original federal grant program recognized that violence among young people is caused by a multitude of factors, including early childhood experiences, family life, mental health, and substance use issues. No single action can be counted on to prevent it. Therefore, the three federal agencies worked together, pooled their resources, and established a program that funds communities across the country to implement a comprehensive approach to mental health promotion and youth violence prevention. To date, more than 13 million students in almost 400 communities from all 50 states have benefited from an SS/HS initiative.

In each of these communities, agencies and organizations from education, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and mental health came together to address these underlying causes of youth violence. Over the years, these collaborations have achieved some dramatic results. A [comprehensive evaluation](#) of some of the initial SS/HS communities reported that more than 90% of school staff saw a reduction of violence on school grounds, and nearly 80% said that SS/HS had reduced violence in their communities.

The SS/HS Framework

With continued support from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) over the past decade and a half, the SS/HS approach has been refined, expanded, and improved. The collective experience of SS/HS communities is best represented by the [SS/HS Framework](#), a simple delta that captures the essence of the SS/HS way. As a delta represents change, the SS/HS Framework represents an approach to mental health promotion and youth violence prevention that creates the conditions for change in your community. If the iconic schoolhouse that serves as the logo of the SS/HS initiative represents *where* we do our work, then the delta of the SS/HS framework represents *how* we do it.



The SS/HS Framework is made up of three parts—elements, strategic approaches, and guiding principles. The following **elements** are the essential goals of an SS/HS initiative—what we are trying to accomplish:

1. Promoting early childhood social and emotional learning and development
2. Promoting mental, emotional, and behavioral health
3. Connecting families, schools, and communities
4. Preventing behavioral health problems
5. Creating safe and violence-free schools

The following **strategic approaches** provide the ways or methods for our agencies and organizations to work together, as partners, to accomplish the work of an SS/HS initiative:



- Collaboration and partnerships
- Technology
- Policy change and development
- Capacity building
- Systemic change and integration

The following **guiding principles** permeate the elements and approaches. Like values, they guide our work on an SS/HS initiative:

- Cultural and linguistic competency
- Serving vulnerable and at-risk populations
- Developmentally appropriate
- Resource leveraging
- Sustainability
- Youth guided and family driven
- Evidence-based interventions

The Crux of It All: Partnerships

An SS/HS initiative works only when a community comes together. The SS/HS Framework helps create the conditions for change, but *collaboration with partners* makes change happen. Many SS/HS communities report that, in addition to making their schools safer and their students healthier, the most important outcome of their SS/HS initiative has been the partnerships. When a school system joins forces with mental health providers and then gets child welfare, juvenile justice, and law enforcement on board, remarkable things happen. When faith communities, businesses, and civic organizations join the movement, the remarkable becomes the substantial. And when families and youth join the initiative, the substantial becomes stellar. Most SS/HS communities will tell you that an SS/HS initiative works best when families and youth are included in all aspects of the initiative. They express the diversity of voices within the community. They inform and improve the planning and delivery of programs and services. And they ultimately become our biggest advocates.

The SS/HS Framework Implementation Toolkit

This Planning Guide is part of a comprehensive toolkit designed to help you implement the SS/HS Framework in your community. The Framework Implementation Toolkit, or Toolkit, is divided into three sections that are defined by the phase of the initiative—planning, implementation, and sustainability and expansion. For each phase, we provide you with a how-to guide like this one as well as the many workbooks, worksheets, and online training courses that were developed for the SS/HS communities. Because most of the resources in this Toolkit were developed for the communities funded by the SS/HS grant program, they are often in-depth, detailed, and structured around mandatory requirements of the grant program. We ask you to keep this in mind as you use these supplemental resources because, at times, they may feel overwhelming. But we recommend that you use what you can and leave the rest for others to use.

Who Should Use This Toolkit

This Toolkit has been developed for the leaders and staff of local educational agencies—a city, county or regional school system or a single school or cluster of schools. As the name implies, Safe Schools is about creating safer environments where students can learn and excel. But if the school or school system is the hub, then the community is its spokes and rims to make the wheel turn. As noted, an SS/HS initiative succeeds only when a community works together. Therefore, this Toolkit is designed to be accessible to the leaders and staff members of partner agencies who can also lead an SS/HS initiative. The many community leaders, staff members, federal employees, policy makers, and families and youth that make up the SS/HS community wish you well in this most important work.



The Comprehensive Plan: A Plan for Success

An SS/HS initiative begins with a plan. Communities funded under the SS/HS grant program were often able to devote considerable time and effort into developing their comprehensive plan, sometimes using the first year of their five-year initiative. You may or may not have this amount of time or the resources available to engage in this level of planning. But regardless of the intensity of your planning, we do know two things: (1) you need a plan and (2) your plan should be comprehensive. By comprehensive, we recommend that your plan include the following sections:

1. **The Community Collaborative**, a statement of which community partners will be a part of the initiative and their proposed role
2. **Vision and Mission**, statements of what your community collaborative envisions in the future and what will drive you there
3. **Community Needs**, identified by conducting a needs assessment, environmental scan, and gaps analysis
4. **Disparities in Your Community**, which explicitly addresses the known behavioral health disparities in your community
5. **Logic Model**, a visual model that will allow you to plan, implement, and evaluate the efficacy of your initiative
6. **Programs and Interventions**, a section describing the proposed evidence- and practice-based programs and interventions
7. **Workforce Capacity Assessment**, a description of the current capacity of the workforce in your community as well as some of the anticipated training needs
8. **Communication**, a plan that outlines how you plan to engage key stakeholder audiences
9. **Evaluation**, a plan that describes the activities you will undertake to determine whether your initiative was successful
10. **Management**, a plan that articulates how you plan to ensure progress and, ultimately, success

The comprehensive plan will help your community get from where you are now to where you want to be. In many ways, the 10 sections are the 10 steps that will get you there. By addressing these 10 areas, you will have developed your own manual on how to coordinate and integrate the activities and efforts of the multiple service systems that make up your community collaborative.

The remainder of this Planning Guide outlines some key activities to develop the 10 sections of a comprehensive plan for your SS/HS initiative. As mentioned, depending on the resources available to your community, the length of these sections will vary. For each section of the plan, we identify the additional tools and resources that are available as part of the [SS/HS Framework Implementation Toolkit](#).

We recommend a periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan; this process includes key stakeholders, including community partners, parents, and youth. This should be done at least annually to inform implementation and development of the next year's budget and to fine tune strategies. Continuous quality improvement strategies are most effective as part of ongoing and systematic planning and implementation of the project.

I. The Community Collaborative and Theory of Change

An SS/HS initiative begins with partners—the agencies and organizations that come together to work as a group in a collaborative way to address the underlying factors of youth violence. Before planning can begin, you will need to identify the partners that will form your collaborative. The SS/HS communities that were funded under the SS/HS program include a local education agency, which led the collaborative, and local mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies. These partnerships were established early in the planning process and required a memorandum of understanding to document the partnership.



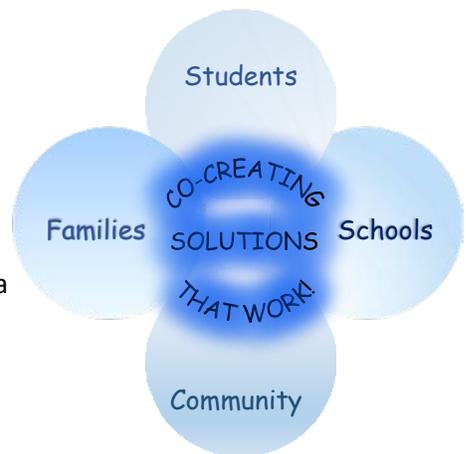
For communities looking to implement the SS/HS Framework, we recommend a similar configuration for your community collaborative. We encourage you to include representatives from these child-serving agencies and organizations with the expertise and authority to share information and make decisions. In addition to these four partners, we also recommend that you invite representatives from community partners such as civic, charitable, and faith-based organizations whose missions are consistent with your planned SS/HS initiative. We recommend including representatives from a third group of crucial partners—families and youth that represent and reflect the diversity of the population(s) to be served by the initiative. Families and youth with “lived experience” are essential to planning and decision making. Lived experience means having personally dealt with the identified social issue, system challenges, or problems that the project is aiming to change, resolve, or eradicate. Lived experience and knowledge, along with the voice of the collective, adds valuable data and perspective to collaborative planning.

The agencies and organizations you invite to the table will depend on who is doing what in your community and what you are trying to accomplish with your SS/HS initiative. The makeup of your community collaborative may also change as you get deeper into planning, implementing, and expanding the initiative. We encourage you to remain flexible by being open to new members as additional needs and resources arise.

Participatory Planning Processes

After you have worked through whom you would like to work with, it is important to think about how you will work together. We recommend that your community collaborative use a participatory planning process to map out your SS/HS initiative. Participatory planning processes have become a standard way to plan community, school, and agency initiatives like SS/HS. In fact, many federal and foundation grant programs now require that grantees include youth, families, and community stakeholders in planning and implementing their projects. And as the experience of many of the SS/HS communities demonstrates, a participatory planning process will help to increase stakeholder engagement and shared commitment, which in turn helps to contribute to higher rates of success.

Developing a theory of change (TOC) and a logic model (discussed later in this guide) are two essential activities of a participatory planning process. Developing a TOC that is unique to the initiative encourages cooperation among the community collaborative because it gives everyone a voice in creating it. Simply, a TOC is an initiative’s theory—its story—about how it will make long-term change happen in the community. An initiative’s TOC describes the types of strategies and actions needed to bring about desired change and outcomes. It provides a roadmap, often in the form of a unique graphic (see Theory of Change graphic at right), that captures the overall vision for how things will change in the community. To remain both relevant and powerful, it is helpful for the community collaborative to regularly revisit its TOC to ensure it stays relevant throughout the course of the initiative.



Theory of Change Process



Why develop a Theory of Change for your Initiative?

A TOC process

- Is collaborative and transparent;
- Invites meaningful participation of many diverse stakeholders with their own strengths, interests, and different levels of experience;
- Encourages collaboration and open communication by ensuring that stakeholders understand one another’s assumptions and expectations;
- Charts the path to change by documenting (1) where you are (i.e., context), (2) where you want to go (i.e., desired outcomes and long-term vision), and (3) agreement (i.e., buy-in on how to get there, often expressed as goals, best practices, proven strategies, and activities);
- Informs quality monitoring and evaluation design;
- Provides a “big picture” perspective of an initiative and serves as an effective communication tool for everyone; and
- Builds a strong foundation of commitment and support for the project.

Adapted from Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action. (Helène Clark, 2011)

SS/HS Framework in Action.

Watch this video on how the [Nevada State SS/HS Initiative](#) developed strong relationships between state and community leaders to create positive change for children, youth, and families in Nevada.

II. Vision and Mission

Developing a Shared Vision

As you begin planning your initiative, it will be important for the collaborative to get to know one another so that you can develop a sense of community and decide how you will work together. SS/HS communities have found that collectively developing a vision and mission with your partners is an important way to achieve these objectives. Bringing your partners together to identify where your values, principles, and priorities overlap will help to create the shared vision. We recommend writing this vision down in a statement. A vision statement articulates what you want to achieve and how you plan to get there. An effective vision statement is not long or complicated, but it will provide clarity, motivation, and inspiration to your collaborative.

Some questions to consider:

- What are the similarities among our agencies’ or organizations’ vision statements?
- What are our collective desired outcomes for our community?
- What will our community look like if we are successful?

Developing a Shared Mission

A mission statement defines why you do what you do. If a vision statement defines what you hope to achieve in the future, a mission statement defines what you will do—today. Again, like a vision statement, we recommend that you work as a collaborative to develop your mission and write it down in a statement. A well-developed mission statement is brief, to the point, and absent of buzz words or jargon. It will keep your collaborative focused on what you are doing, how you plan to accomplish it, and what needs you are seeking to meet. In some cases, the mission statement may be even more concise than your vision statement. For example, SAMHSA’s mission is “to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.” Its [vision](#) is somewhat more detailed. We have included some examples of vision and mission statements from SS/HS communities below.



Some questions to consider:

- Why did you form your community collaborative? What is your primary motivation?
- What is the broadest way to describe your work?
- How can you use action words such as “collaborate,” “engage,” “achieve,” “develop,” “empower,” etc.?
- What is the purpose of your work?
- What are the underlying values or beliefs upon which the work is based?
- Where is the work to be done?

SS/HS Framework in Action

SS/HS grantees, in collaboration with their community partners, developed mission and vision statements early to guide their work throughout the initiative. Below are a few SS/HS state grantee vision and mission statements:

Michigan

- Vision: A comprehensive, multitiered, community-based system that provides best practices, integrated partnerships, and agency services to contribute to successful educational, physical, and behavioral health outcomes for all children and families.
- Mission: The Michigan Health and Education Partnership is a collaboration of culturally responsive systems that supports, sustains, enhances, and influences best practices to support children and families in their mental/physical/social–emotional well-being so that all students are college and career ready.

Nevada

- Vision: Nevada’s communities promote safe and respectful schools where students and families reach their highest potential.
- Mission: Our initiative transforms school and community systems to enhance supports for the mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being of all students. We achieve this through the use of prevention-focused, evidence-based practices and data-based decision making. We collaborate at the federal, state, and local levels to provide programs, services, and opportunities that promote healthy families, schools, and communities.

Ohio

- Vision: Children and families will be socially, emotionally, and behaviorally resilient and productive citizens.
- Mission: To help local community collaboration improve the health, well-being, and educational needs of children and families.

Wisconsin

- Vision: Create a network of communities throughout Wisconsin with integrated systems that result in positive youth development.
- Mission: Take positive and sustainable steps that promote the health, safety, and well-being of Wisconsin children, youth, and families in order to foster successful outcomes and ensure all students are college, career, and community ready.

III. Statement of Community Needs

When you have defined your collaborative and what you hope to accomplish, it will be time to start planning how you will meet the needs of your community. This planning process begins with a needs assessment and environmental scan to develop a current picture of needs, assets, and gaps, including service and infrastructure gaps.



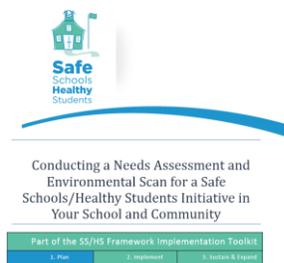
An effective assessment will provide information about the quality of the environment that children encounter—in the community, family, home, neighborhood, and school—that can influence and affect outcomes. It will also help you identify *priority areas* and a *population of focus*. We recommend that you report your findings and areas of focus in a Statement of Community Needs as part of your comprehensive plan.

The information collected through the needs assessment and environmental scan will help your community collaborative identify the priority areas. Ideally, it will also include an explanation of how you selected the priority areas for your community. The statement should also outline the population of focus, that is, the group of children and youth that you have identified as the intended recipients of resources and services. By doing so, you will be able to determine what interventions or strategies to select and whether they are effective. For example, if your population of focus is middle school students, the evidence-based program (EBP) selected should be effective for middle school students, and the data collected for the objective related to this activity should be data collected from middle school students.

SS/HS communities have had a lot of experience conducting needs assessments and environmental scans as well as developing statements of community needs. This collective wisdom is captured in the workbook and illustrated in the [SS/HS Framework in Action](#) section.

Resources

Guide



SS/HS Framework in Action

Read how the Wisconsin State SS/HS Initiative conducted a needs assessment to inform program planning, service delivery, and develop professional development and training opportunities to build capacity to implement mental health services, evidence-based practices, and supports

IV: Disparities in Your Community

As a community is developing its priority areas and population of focus, it is helpful to conduct a more thorough evaluation of groups—often referred to as subpopulations—that may be unserved, underserved, or inappropriately served within your population of focus. In the context of an SS/HS initiative, these groups are often defined by ethnicity, race, or LGBTQ status. Communities funded by the SS/HS program were required to conduct this assessment and develop a Disparities Impact Statement (DIS). We recommend that you conduct one as part of your planning process.

Why do we recommend that your SS/HS initiative conduct this assessment and develop a DIS? Populations of focus often describe populations based on geographic location, socioeconomic status, and other factors that influence health and academic outcomes. In general, populations of focus will have challenges regarding access, availability, or appropriateness of prevention or treatment programs, quality of services, and exposure to risk factors, such as isolation and bullying. Subpopulations within the populations of focus will also face these challenges *as well as additional challenges*—for example, higher rates of school suspensions and expulsions, dropouts, or mental health or substance use disorders. A DIS will help your community collaborative determine



the disparities among the subpopulations by identifying the contributing root causes and contextual factors. By understanding these factors, your community collaborative will be better able to develop an action-oriented approach within your plan.

If you develop a DIS, consider the following two important factors:

- (1) It takes a lot of time, effort, and resources to address behavioral health disparities and disproportionalities among subpopulations. Therefore, consider aligning your planned work in this area with what agencies and programs are already doing to reduce these disparities in your community. You may uncover some of this information during your needs assessment and environmental scan or you may need to focus on it specifically.
- (2) The DIS template and supplemental materials developed for the SS/HS communities incorporate the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (CLAS Standards), a set of standards developed under the stewardship of the Office of Minority Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These standards are intended “to improve health care quality and advance health equity by establishing a framework for organizations to serve the nation's increasingly diverse communities.” Take advantage of this national framework and all the work that has been done under it by aligning your work with the CLAS Standards.

As mentioned, the SS/HS communities were required to develop a DIS as part of their funding agreement with SAMHSA. As a result, we have developed a number of excellent resources to help you assess behavioral health disparities and disproportionalities among subpopulations and develop a DIS. Click on the images below to access these resources.

Resources

Online Training



Worksheet



SS/HS Framework in Action

Watch this video on how [New Hampshire State SS/HS Initiative](#) embedded CLAS Standards in public education to meet the needs of diverse populations and educate and care for the whole child in New Hampshire.

V. Logic Model

Logic models are important tools for public health practitioners because they graphically depict how a program or initiative plans to achieve long-term outcomes. Logic models were also the central element of the SS/HS communities' comprehensive plans. As a result, we have several excellent resources to help you develop your model. These resources are listed below, along with several sample logic models.

A project logic model provides sufficient detail needed to guide implementation of the overall initiative as envisioned by the TOC. The intent of the project logic model is to clarify the relationship between identified



needs and gaps with corresponding goals, measurable objectives, and strategies aimed at addressing the needed change. Strategies include activities, curricula, policy, programs, and services. Each linear section of the logic model depicts how all action steps align with process and targeted outcome measures along with time frames for completion of each item. Staff, as well as stakeholders and partnering agencies, can assume the role of strategy leader. A logic model, formatted as a matrix, serves as an effective project management tool and provides a framework for your evaluation plan.

Why develop a logic model?

A logic model

- Is linear and in a matrix format detailing planned activities that will lead to outputs, which lead to outcomes and the overarching goal;
- Clearly describes the intended long-term outcomes of the initiative;
- Aligns needs and gaps data with corresponding goals and objectives;
- Specifies selected program activities, evidence-based programs, services, policies, and strategies to reach the stated goals and objectives;
- Identifies staff and partner responsibilities for designated functions for each objective;
- Details process and outcome measures for each objective as the source of evidence for determining whether the program is reaching targeted objectives;
- Helps the project manager monitor implementation, progress, and adherence to the project principles; and
- Along with the TOC, informs development of the evaluation plan.

Key Success Factor: Set SMART Goals and Objectives With Your Community Collaborative

Earlier, we recommended that you develop the vision and mission of your planned SS/HS initiative with the partners that make up your community collaborative to help build the collaborative and achieve commitment from all the partners. For these same reasons, we also recommend that you work with your community collaborative to develop the goals and objectives that will drive your logic model.



SS/HS communities have found that the most effective goals and objectives in a logic model are SMART—that is, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. By using the SMART framework, you will help to ensure that the goals and objectives are clear and reachable. Here are some questions to consider when you work with your community collaborative to develop your goals and objectives:

- Is the goal clearly defined and **SPECIFIC** in what you want to achieve?
- Can the results be **MEASURED** at certain intervals to determine progress?
- Is the goal **ATTAINABLE** with available resources?
- Is the goal **RELEVANT** and aligned with the program mission?
- Is the goal **TIME BOUND** and realistic?

As we have suggested, there are several other important parts of a logic model. The online training and logic model worksheet, listed below, will help you further develop and complete your logic model. The following section on selecting EBPs and interventions is also a critical part of planning an SS/HS initiative. As with most sections in this guide, click on the images below to access supplemental resources.

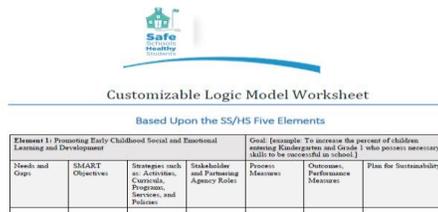


Resources

Online Training



Worksheet



SS/HS Framework in Action

Below is an excerpt of an SS/HS grantee's logic model to create safe and violence-free schools (Element 5).

SS/HS Element 5: Creating Safe and Violence-Free Schools				
Goal: To reduce the level of violence in schools and increase student perception of safety in school and in their community.				
Baseline Data	Objectives	Activities	Process Measures	Outcome and Performance Measures
Baseline: 24% of high school students did not go to school because they felt unsafe at or on their way to school (YRBS, 2016 data).	School district will reduce the percentage of students who did not go to school one or more days during the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to school from 24% to 20% by end of May 2017.	Convene an EBP subcommittee (school and collaborative members) to map out existing research and assess appropriate universal violence prevention evidence-based interventions.	EBP subcommittee developed. Mapping exercise completed with recommendations. Number of programs identified (new and/or existing).	As measured by YRBS, 2017 survey data, decrease the percentage of students who did not attend school because they did not feel safe by 4%.

VI: Programs and Interventions

Selecting Evidence-Based Programs and Interventions

The SS/HS program was designed to address youth violence using an evidence-based approach; that is, SS/HS communities were required to select EBPs and evidence-based interventions (EBIs) that have been proven effective through outcome evaluations. By requiring communities to use EBPs and EBIs, SAMHSA and the other funding agencies were ensuring the highest probability of success for the communities. With an assessment and a partial logic model in hand (the logic model will be completed once you have added the programs and interventions to the mix), we recommend that your community consider EBPs and EBIs as the most effective way to address the underlying causes of youth violence in your communities. The following section highlights some of the most important factors to consider when planning your programs and interventions. At the end of this section, we highlight several excellent resources including an online training and a workbook, that can help



you and your community collaborative delve deeper into the challenging but important practice of selecting EBPs and EBIs.

Many factors come into play when selecting EBPs and EBIs. Your needs assessment helped you identify the most pressing needs within your community that can be addressed through an EBP or EBI. Ideally, this assessment helped you to clarify the intensity, severity, and duration of the problems present in the population of focus or the subpopulation. Now you want to consider several factors before selecting an EBP or EBI.

Scope of Program or Intervention: Universal, Selective, and Indicated

Consider the scope or focus of the prevention programs. In public health, we usually talk about three categories of programs or interventions: universal, selective, and indicated. For an SS/HS initiative, a universal EBP or EBI will focus on all students in the school and likely address risk and protective factors, such as social skills, drug resistance skills, and effective ways to resist peer pressure. A selective EBP or EBI will focus on groups of students who are at risk for an identified outcome, such as children who are at high risk for aggressive behaviors, drug use, and delinquency. Finally, an indicated EBP or EBI will focus on and address identified problems for a specific group, for example, a program aimed at supporting high school students who have failed at least one grade and who also demonstrate poor academic achievement and truancy.

Level of Implementation

When selecting an EBP or EBI for the population of focus, consider whether the EBP or EBI will be implemented in all or just parts of the community. Are you planning to implement it throughout the district or only at one or two schools? Perhaps you are considering a hybrid model—piloting a smaller scale implementation in one or a few schools or neighborhoods and then applying this experience to a broader level of implementation. Other factors that will likely affect your decisions about level of implementation include presenting need, existing resources, staff or provider capacity, funding, and readiness.

Readiness to Implement

To ensure the highest chances of success, consider whether the organization and its staff charged with implementing the EBP or EBI is ready. Look at critical factors, such as motivation of staff, access to resources, attributes of the organization, and organizational commitment. For example, if you are planning to implement an EBP or EBI in a school, then you will need to consider support and buy-in from school administrators, teachers, support staff, families, and, of course, students.

Alignment With Existing Structures and Practices

Prior to selecting and implementing an EBP or EBI, consider how it will fit with the existing structures and practices of the implementing agency or organization. It is important to inventory the current programs and services that are available in the intended setting (e.g., school, district, community) to determine whether the planned EBP or EBI is compatible with and does not duplicate these current programs and services.

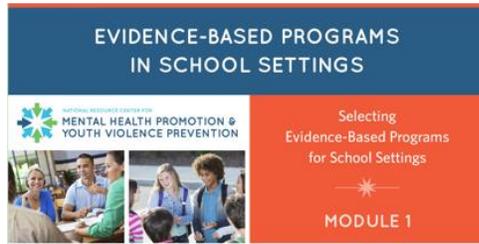
Youth Involvement

Finally, as a mental health promotion and violence prevention program for *youth*, consider how youth will be, or can be, involved in the EBP or EBI. For example, a universal EBP or EBI to reduce bullying behaviors may appropriately include the entire student body or a particular grade level as the population of focus. On the other hand, an EBP or EBI designed to address a specific problem, such as treating a mental health disorder, will likely include only a small number of youth. In that case, as with all selected and indicated interventions that serve only a subset of the population, it is important to use data to identify those who would most benefit from the intervention. Click on the images below to access a series of interactive EBP online trainings and printable workbook.



Resources

Online Training



Workbook



SS/HS Framework in Action

Read how the Pennsylvania State SS/HS Initiative developed an evidence-based protocol to guide community-level teams in identifying and selecting programs and practices.

VII. Workforce Capacity Assessment

Assessing Current Capacity and Future Needs

As you plan your initiative, it will be helpful to assess the current capacity and future needs of the leadership and staff members across the community collaborative who will be charged with implementing the EBPs and EBIs. A well-prepared and well-supported workforce across the partner agencies and organizations is vital to the implementation and sustainability of a successful initiative.

Some questions to consider in assessing your current capacity:

- What programs and services are needed?
- Who or what agency or organization already provides the program or service?
- What training will be needed to meet the identified needs and gaps in the program or service?
- How can we build capacity to ensure that we address the CLAS Standards?
- How will we fund the identified training?
- What is the best use of resources for training? Who needs to be trained?
- How will we develop the training to build capacity to ensure long-term sustainability?

Engaging Family and Youth in Training

The SS/HS program and communities are very much influenced by the system of care approach. We believe that “family-driven means families should have a primary decision-making role in the care of their own children as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory, and nation.” When it comes to supporting and training the workforce, “family-driven” means that family and youth are engaged as equal and valued partners in the design and implementation of these programs. When planning your initiative, we encourage you to look for opportunities to engage the leaders of family and youth organizations that represent the populations of focus in all phases of planning, training, technical assistance, and professional development. These representatives can help build the capacity of families and youth to provide training, technical assistance, and evaluation of these essential programs.

Developing Training Plans

In planning your SS/HS initiative, consider how the agencies and organizations within your community collaborative will assess current needs for training, identify existing training, and establish priorities for future training to address the needs and gaps identified in your widespread assessment. Consider how your initiative



will support these training needs, both at the broad system level as well as within the community organizations. Some questions to consider in developing your training plan include:

- What training requirements did you identify in the needs assessment and environmental scan?
- Did these training requirements also include workforce development training needs?
- How will you determine what type of training will be most effective?
- How will you adapt and modify your training approach to meet changing needs and priorities of your initiative and the workforce?
- How will you ensure that training builds capacity while adhering to the CLAS Standards?

SS/HS Framework in Action

Read how the [Michigan SS/HS State Initiative](#) is infusing family engagement principles across state agencies and has developed an instrument to measure attitudes and beliefs toward engaging families. Included is a video highlighting the evolution and successes of family engagement in the Saginaw Public School District in Michigan.

VIII. Communication for Success and Sustainability

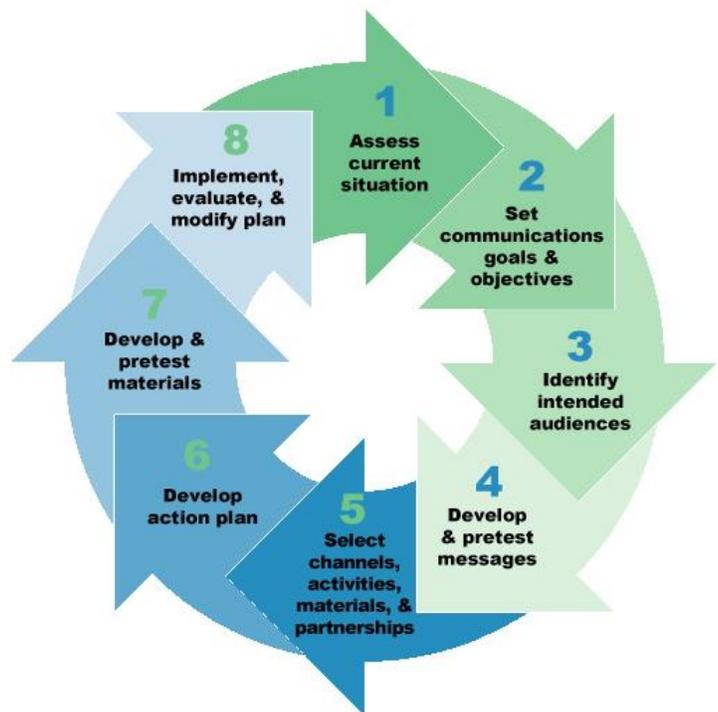
SS/HS communities have learned that communication with key stakeholders is critical to the short-term success and long-term sustainability of your work. Engaging these stakeholders at the beginning and throughout your initiative will help ensure that they become and remain partners in prevention and systems change, now and well as into the future. We recommend that you develop a communication plan as part of the planning process so your initiative will not be “the best-kept secret in town” after years of hard work.

Planning Your Efforts

There are two important things to keep in mind when planning your communication efforts: (1) there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to communication. A single brochure or a press release for all audiences will not move any of them to action. Therefore, plan to target your communication efforts to strategic, selected audiences. (2) Communicate early, and communicate often. SS/HS communities learned that the longer you wait to engage these strategic audiences, the less likely it is that you will be able to sustain and expand the initiative. You need these audiences on board as soon as possible and throughout your initiatives. When working with SS/HS communities, we encouraged them to think and act “like a social marketer”—that is, engage the right audiences at the right time to do the right things.

As with all programmatic efforts, effective communication and social marketing begin with planning. To support the SS/HS communities, we developed several resources to encourage a strategic approach to effective communication, including the eight-step planning model shown above that helps community collaboratives work through the communication planning process. These steps include:

1. Identify existing resources that could be leveraged for your communication efforts.





2. Articulate communication goals and objectives in relation to program goals and objectives.
3. Identify key stakeholders as audiences and partners.
4. Develop and test messages and talking points that move audiences to take action.
5. Plan the development of materials, activities, and partnerships to engage audiences.
6. Develop an action plan that will ensure that the work gets done and that these efforts are evaluated.
7. Develop *and pretest* the materials.
8. Implement, evaluate, and modify as you go.

Your communication efforts should support the goals and objectives of your comprehensive plan. For instance, if your comprehensive plan includes EBIs to reduce bullying at the middle school level, then communication planning could help to

- Solidify buy-in from principals, teachers, and other school staff;
- Engage youth in the planned intervention to improve outcomes;
- Inform parents and the wider community of your efforts to keep their children safe and healthy; and
- Share successes with decision makers to ensure sustainability.

Consider Social Marketing as an EBI

Social marketing is a targeted communication effort that uses commercial marketing strategies and tactics to persuade a specific group to adopt or change a behavior (e.g., to stop or prevent bullying, seek prevention resources, minimize stigma around mental health, or seek treatment for substance abuse). Many SS/HS communities used a social marketing campaign to support their overall goals and objectives. Click on the resources below and learn more about using both strategic communication and social marketing as part of your SS/HS initiative.

Resources

Online Training



Workbook



SS/HS Framework in Action

An infographic is an excellent way to visually communicate your initiative's successes to a wide audience range. Click [here](#) to download a template used by many of the SS/HS grantees.

IX. Evaluation

An essential part of the comprehensive plan is an evaluation plan, which will help your initiative measure progress, troubleshoot challenges, and make data-informed decisions. Both the short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes identified in your logic model will form the basis for this evaluation plan. Your logic model should also outline the kinds of data that will help you accomplish these objectives. As you work to implement



your evaluation plan, it is important to ensure that leaders and staff members within the community collaborative understand why the data are being collected and how data will be used.

Measure Progress, Troubleshoot Challenges, Make Data-Informed Decisions

Before beginning implementation, it is important to gather your baseline data so that you can measure progress and outcomes. During implementation, it is helpful to bring the community collaborative together to review evaluation data to identify successes and troubleshoot implementation challenges. SS/HS communities were encouraged to use data to inform their continuous quality-improvement process, and we encourage your community collaborative to do the same. Data can be used to assess, for example, whether your staff members' strengths and qualifications are consistent with their assigned roles on the initiative or they can be used to ensure that staff members' cultural and linguistic competence (especially in terms of language) are appropriate for the population of focus.

The data and feedback to inform your continuous quality-improvement processes will, of course, vary and be gathered according to your evaluation plan. Over the years, SS/HS communities have used self-reports of staff effectiveness, fidelity monitoring, and coaching to program implementers. For outcome measures specifically related to EBPs and EBIs, look to their process and outcomes measures and adapt them as needed to fit the needs of the community implementing the program or intervention. Click on the images below to access an online training module on how to develop an evaluation plan and listen to SS/HS evaluators discuss strategies and offer practical tips on evaluating comprehensive programs similar to SS/HS.

Resources

Online Training



Podcast

SS/HS Framework in Action

Read how the Connecticut State SS/HS Initiative used qualitative and quantitative evaluation data to understand and support the mental health needs of LGBTQ youth in a Bridgeport, Connecticut, school district.

X. Management

Although SS/HS is about communities getting together to collaborate on mental health promotion and violence prevention for their youth and families, the success of an SS/HS initiative often hinges on the effectiveness of its project leadership and management team. Like all initiatives that involve multiple staff and partners, effectively managing an SS/HS initiative will involve wearing many hats—communicating with staff and stakeholders, managing and supporting staff, tracking deliverables and work products, and managing budgets, to name a few. To wear all of these hats effectively, it is helpful to have a plan. The following section highlights some of the most important factors to consider when planning how to manage your SS/HS initiative.



Communication

SS/HS communities learned that it is essential to keep leaders and staff—both within your organization as well as at the agencies and organizations that are part of the community collaborative—informed and engaged. An internal communications strategy will help you do this. This strategy should address frequency and format of communication as well as roles and responsibilities. It should also include a process for how to address any disagreements or concerns raised by any member of the collaborative.

Quality Assurance and Fiscal Management

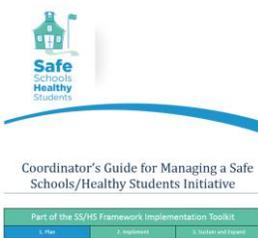
Your management plan should include a process for ongoing quality assessment and process improvement to ensure that your team is meeting deadlines and quality standards for deliverables and work products. To ensure sound fiscal management, your plan should outline a system to track and report up-to-date financial information, including current expenditures and projected costs. Have a system in place for regular monitoring and oversight of all budgetary components. If you are funding any partners, make sure they know about the internal controls that go along with the funding. SS/HS communities found it helpful to meet at least quarterly with funded partners to ensure that they fully understand relevant fiscal policies and procedures. Finally, make sure you establish and document clear protocols for budgetary management and a process to promptly address any concerns that may arise.

Decision Making

SS/HS communities understood both the power and challenge of shared decision making. While it is an essential part of any collaboration, it is also important to have clear lines of responsibility and communication among the partners as well as protocols to address any concerns should they arise. Determine who will oversee deliverables and how those deliverables will be monitored. Develop protocols for how to make decisions related to program modifications. And make sure that all decision making related to resolving conflict and grievances are informed by clearly articulated policies and procedures. Click on the image below to access the *Coordinator's Guide for Managing a SS/HS Initiative*.

Resources

Guide



SS/HS Framework in Action

Read how the Ohio State SS/HS Initiative developed the Healthy Schools and Communities Resource Team to integrate and align the work, using shared decision-making strategies to align the work among federal-funding initiatives to build capacity for mental and behavioral health services

XI. Next Steps

This guide, and the other guides and resources in the [SS/HS Framework Implementation Toolkit](#) represent the experience and lessons learned by the coordinators and managers of the SS/HS communities. We trust that you will take advantage of the collective wisdom represented in this resource, so you and your community can



plan, implement, and sustain an initiative that supports schools and communities in creating safe, healthy, and productive schools where students can learn and grow into healthy and contributing adults.

We invite you to review and use the other guides in this Toolkit:

- [Implementing a SS/HS Initiative in Your School and Community](#)
- [Sustaining & Expanding a SS/HS Initiative in Your School and Community with Support from the State](#)
- [Coordinator’s Guide for Managing a SS/HS Initiative](#)

Each guide includes examples and recommendations. We also feature additional resources—including checklists and online training modules—on the [SS/HS Framework Implementation Toolkit](#) website.