

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Framework Implementation Toolkit: Making Schools—and Students—Safer

SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS: A CUSTOMIZABLE APPROACH FOR ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT, ANYWHERE

The causes—and cures—for youth violence are complex. What works in one community may not work in another.

Recognizing that “one size does *not* fit all,” the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Framework—and the new Framework Implementation Toolkit—is far from a cookie-cutter approach.

FAST FACTS

Since 2013, in 21 diverse communities across seven states:

- **34,000** students received school-based mental health services.
- **60,000** individuals were trained in youth violence prevention and mental health promotion.
- **200,000** students were served by Safe Schools/Healthy Students programs.

CHILDREN CANNOT LEARN WHEN THEY DO NOT FEEL SAFE

Every student deserves to feel safe at school. But with each reported school shooting, we hear students, their parents, and the caring adults who dedicate their lives to educating children and youth ask the same questions: “*Can this happen at my school? What are we doing to prevent violence from happening here?*”

This heightened level of stress—particularly among students—is toxic and traumatic, and the consequences are real. Students are unable to focus, learn, and thrive in school. Grades suffer. Behavioral and mental health issues are likely to emerge. Rates of substance abuse, absenteeism, and dropouts may increase.

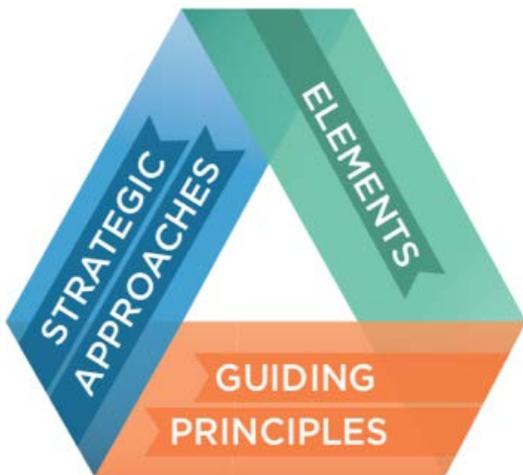
The effects of toxic stress are sparked by extreme acts of newsworthy violence. But they can also be triggered by any violent event, such as the suicide of a peer or cyberbullying.

Every school district across the country is searching for a solution to youth violence. But the causes—and cures—are complex. What works in one community may not work in another. Urban, suburban, rural, and tribal districts across the country each have their own realities and challenges—and almost all of them have finite resources for proactively addressing this issue.

In other words, any real solution must be comprehensive, flexible, and evidence-based. Any district must be able to customize this solution to meet its own realities, leaving every student, parent, and teacher feeling able to say, “*Here’s what we are doing to prevent violence from happening here.*”

That’s where the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) (Safe Schools FIT) comes in. The Safe Schools FIT is a fully customizable solution that allows any school district to create a safer, healthier, sustainable environment for learning that works *for them*.

THE SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS FRAMEWORK



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Collaboration & Partnership
- Technology
- Policy Change & Development
- Systemic Change & Integration

ELEMENTS

- Promoting Early Childhood Social & Emotional Learning
- Promoting Mental, Emotional & Behavioral Health
- Connecting Families, Schools & Communities
- Preventing Behavioral Health Problems
- Creating Safe & Violence-Free Schools

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Cultural & Linguistic Competency
- Serving Vulnerable & At-Risk Populations
- Developmentally Appropriate
- Resource Leveraging
- Sustainability
- Youth-Guided & Family-Driven
- Evidence-Based Interventions

➔ AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION: THE SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a long-standing commitment to the safety and well-being of children in schools. Since 1999, it has provided funding and oversight to hundreds of SS/HS school districts across the country.

In 2013, SAMHSA took a fresh look at the SS/HS model. After reviewing what worked in real-world settings, examining the latest research, and applying best practices for program implementation, SAMHSA developed the SS/HS Framework—an in-depth, interactive tool that provides a foundation for successful and sustainable initiatives to prevent youth violence and promote mental health.

For the past four years, 21 communities in seven states have successfully used the SS/HS Framework. Now, any state, community, or school district can adapt this innovative solution themselves by using the Safe Schools FIT, available at <http://www.healthysafechildren.org/sites/safe-schools-healthy-students-framework-implementation-toolkit>.

Building on the Framework's core components of strategic approaches, core elements, and guiding principles, the SS/HS FIT's flexibility meets users where they are. A comprehensive collection of planning guides, online learning modules, handbooks, worksheets, podcasts, and other resources guide staff and partners through planning, implementation, and sustainability.

Along the way, the Safe Schools FIT provides step-by-step guidance— from conducting a needs assessment to selecting evidence-based programs, from building partnerships to engaging youth and families, and from evaluating successful outcomes to sustaining the critical work of ensuring that children and youth are healthy, and schools are significantly safer.

For more information on how any state, community, or school district can create safer learning environments using the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Framework and the Framework Implementation Toolkit, visit:

www.healthysafechildren.org

FORMER SS/HS PROJECT DIRECTORS SAY IT BEST

“How do you make schools safe? You do it by understanding students’ emotional and mental health needs, and then providing appropriate services. A school can’t do it alone though. You must do it as a community. You create a safe and orderly school environment and a better community, and students develop into healthier adults.”

“The SS/HS initiative has allowed us to really dream about the ideal way for schools and law enforcement to work together, and it challenged us to change. We now understand that we have the same mission—to keep students safe, on campus and in the community, so they can succeed—and we work as a team to protect and support our students.”

MAPPING SUCCESS, ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT AT A TIME

The Safe Schools FIT provides real-world solutions to youth violence prevention and mental health promotion. From kindergarten through high school, 21 diverse school districts and communities across seven states have used this interactive framework to reshape their own educational environments.

For instance:

- New Britain, CT, has reduced its overall number of suspensions and expulsions by 50% since 2013. Students are increasingly engaged in reducing violence, as evidenced by a 2016 rally to foster better relations between police and youth and a 2017 training on Internet safety in which 2,000 students participated.
- Since implementing the SS/HS model, Wisconsin school districts have seen a 16% drop in the number of LGBTQ students who reported being bullied.
- Saginaw, MI, saw a 17% decrease in the number of students who reported being in a fight at school.
- Washoe County, NV, has experienced a 39% decrease in the number of students who skip school because they do not feel safe.

As resource-strapped school districts nationwide look for solutions to help prevent youth violence, the SS/HS Framework fills a critical need. And now, with the introduction of the Safe Schools FIT, it is possible for schools to design, implement, and sustain a comprehensive, customized, and evidence-based local initiative that helps every student feel safer.

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