



Model for Mental Health Supports in Schools

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) strives to give all students comprehensive support, with every adult serving a role in students' social-emotional well-being. The school system embeds mental health supports throughout the instructional program and embraces community and family partnerships. This approach better equips HCPSS to help each child thrive socially, academically and emotionally.


1 in 4
Howard County high school students experienced sad or hopeless feelings*


1 in 5
Howard County middle school students experienced sad or hopeless feelings*

*Source: 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

57%
of Howard County children demonstrated readiness for kindergarten,** with social (emotional) foundations among the key criteria

**Source: 2019-20 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



Ways HCPSS is Supporting Students and Staff...

Student Well-Being

- Student Support Teams (SSTs) at every school provide a structured process to identify students' social-emotional, academic, and/or behavioral needs. They connect students and families with appropriate resources and facilitate coordination of care.
- Parent outreach and support for student well-being are provided through SST. Staff in the BSAP, Hispanic Achievement, and International Student and Family Services offices provide school-based and central programming.
- HCPSS student services staff are available to support students and families in need.
 - Staff include school counselors, school psychologists, cluster nurses, alternative educators, school social workers, liaisons, and pupil personnel workers, as well as mental health therapists for the Homewood community.
 - Students and families are welcomed and encouraged to contact staff for support.

Employee Well-Being

- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has been enhanced and rebranded to Staff Counseling and Support Services to increase utilization and access to valuable resources.
- The HCPSS Employee Well-Being Funding Program welcomes schools and offices to apply for grants to support well-being through a wide range of programming, such as yoga, mindfulness speakers, healthy cooking classes and more.
 - Grants are made possible through HCPSS' partnership with CareFirst and AETNA.
- Well-being representatives are in place in every school and office.

Professional Learning for Staff

- School social workers, school counselors and school psychologists receive annual training for suicide intervention procedures.
 - Trainings for school staff operating in a referral role have occurred at both the central office and school levels, and include instructional and administrative staff.

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Ways HCPSS is Supporting Students and Staff...

Professional Learning for Staff, *(continued)*

- School-based student services staff use a Suicide Prevention for Educators training during staff meetings, which can be reviewed annually.
- Crisis teams are available to support schools, both immediately during a crisis and after a crisis involving a student or staff member.

Superintendent Advisory

- The Superintendent's Mental Health Community Subcabinet, comprised of organization leaders and executives, works in tandem with the Mental Health Community Advisory Council (MHCAC), which has representation from over 40 different organizations in Howard County. This advisory:
 - Informs and collaborates with HCPSS staff to establish joint solutions.
 - Builds community awareness about mental health and helps destigmatize support.
 - Promotes the Network of Care 3.0 directory.
 - Links to a directory of training opportunities available for mental health professionals and community members.

Community Supports

- **Grassroots**
 - **24 Hour Crisis Hotline – 410-531-6677**
Individuals may call for a variety of reasons including suicide, family and relationship problems, shelter needs, violent or threatening domestic situations, loneliness or depression, and chemical dependency issues, among others.
 - **Mobile Crisis Team – 410-531-6677**
This two-member team of master's level mental health professionals respond with the police to psychiatric emergencies, family crises, and other traumatic events in the community. Operates from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.
 - **Walk-in Counseling**
Anyone in need of immediate assistance may walk in to the agency at any time to see a counselor. An appointment is not needed to receive services. There is no fee for the service.
- **Howard County Health Department Behavioral Health Navigator – 410-313-6202**
Available to help families find resources in the community to support children and adults.
- **CARE Line for Howard County Families – 410-313-CARE**
Resource and referral service provided by the Howard County Office of Children and Families.

Suicide Prevention

- Suicide and Mental Health Awareness Campaign
 - Implemented partnership with the Howard County Health Department (HCHD).
 - Posters are prominently displayed in middle and high schools to raise awareness of teen mental health issues, including suicide, by encouraging students, families, school staff, and community members to learn warning signs and how to start conversations with students who may be in distress.
- Preventing Youth Suicide: hcpsne.ws/prev_suicide
Tips For Families document includes warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors for families. Community resources and actionable steps families can take if there are concerns about suicidal ideation are included.
- Suicide Prevention: hcpsne.ws/suicide-signs
Information for Educators document educates school staff about warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors, and includes lessons for all secondary students (e.g., School Counseling prevention lessons, Health Education Signs of Suicide).

Suicide Intervention

- HCPSS responds seriously to any threat of self-harm or suicidal behavior. Any time a student makes a statement, or is reported by someone else (whether a staff member, student, parent, or community member) to have made a statement that may be interpreted as potentially self-harmful, it is the responsibility of all school staff to refer the student immediately to an HCPSS mental health specialist, mental health therapist, school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker.
- Detailed procedures have been established that identify the roles and responsibilities of school staff in responding to students suspected of being suicidal, and structuring the referral, interview, and follow-up steps in intervening with a potentially suicidal student.

For general inquiries, contact the HCPSS Program Innovation and Student Well-Being office at 410-313-6776 or visit: hcpsne.ws/mentalhealth. For school-based information, contact your school's Student Support Team.



Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D., Superintendent

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