

## THE BIG PICTURE

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) explicitly recognizes that feeling safe and supported are necessary conditions for students to learn and achieve. The new federal law provides multiple opportunities to create these conditions by implementing comprehensive school safety measures that balance physical and psychological safety. Too often schools opt for single programs or a piece of security equipment as a quick fix and ignore the far more effective and sustainable comprehensive strategies that support both safety and learning. School psychologists have relevant expertise and can provide a leadership voice to help state and local district leaders establish effective measures across the school safety continuum. This ranges from promoting positive school climates, violence prevention efforts, and trauma sensitive practices to conducting threat assessment and crisis preparedness, intervention, and recovery efforts. Importantly, school psychologists can help integrate school safety with ongoing positive behavior, social-emotional learning, effective discipline, and school mental health services.

## COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY

ESSA recognizes the importance of school safety and school climate data in measuring school success. States must include data related to school climate and safety in annual school report cards, and such data could be included in the state's accountability system. Further, ESSA contains various policies and funding opportunities for schools and districts to implement comprehensive school safety and crisis response policy and practice aligned with the *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*. Comprehensive school safety planning is grounded in preparedness. It begins with understanding and identifying areas of risk and need unique to the school in order to address the preparedness objectives related to prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery. Components of comprehensive school safety planning include:

- Data collection and data based decision making
- Planning and preparing for a variety of risk and hazards that may impact a school
- Employing and integrating positive behavior and discipline practices, as well as mental health supports
- Collaboration with outside agencies

School psychologists play a critical role in creating safe and supportive learning environments that promote student learning and are critical members of school crisis prevention and response teams.

This work requires effective school leadership and meaningful, ongoing collaboration and consultation with school psychologists to ensure that efforts to improve school safety are based on appropriately interpreted data collected from valid and reliable measures. States, districts, and schools can build on existing school safety efforts by leveraging opportunities in ESSA to:

- Blend various funding streams (e.g., Title I, Title II, Title IV) to implement multitiered systems of support to integrate service delivery for all students with efforts to improve school climate and safety.
- Implement comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services.
- Provide professional development: to improve understanding of how to support children impacted by trauma.
- Implement evidence-based policy and practices to prevent bullying and harassment.
- Engage in efforts to prevent violence, including teen dating violence.

## Every Student Succeeds Act Opportunities: Comprehensive School Safety

- Provide evidence-based school safety training to teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, and other relevant staff critical to comprehensive school safety efforts.
- Disseminate and promote examples of best practices in school safety.
- Improve coordination and collaboration with community agencies in efforts to prevent violence and improve school safety.

### KEY MESSAGES

School psychologists play a critical role in creating safe and supportive learning environments that promote student learning and are critical members of school crisis prevention and response teams. They understand how comprehensive school safety is established when schools combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., visitor check in procedures, locked doors) with efforts to enhance school climate, improve student engagement, foster respectful and trusting relationships among students and staff, and support overall student success. School administrators and other key decision makers can leverage school psychologists' specific training and expertise to:

- Develop, implement, and evaluate policies and practices that promote safe school environments for all students.
- Develop and lead crisis prevention and response policy and practices at the district and school levels, including regular practice and review of safety plans.
- Provide education for students, staff, and parents on the symptoms, warning signs, and risk factors of depression and youth suicide.
- Conduct risk assessments (e.g., suicide and threat assessment), implement intervention procedures, and provide resources for students, staff, and families in need.
- Create a trauma-sensitive school environment that is responsive to the needs of the children and youth who have experienced stress, adversity, or trauma at home or in the community.
- Serve as part of a crisis intervention team to assist with the recovery of students and staff after a crisis. With research informed training, school psychologist help evaluate the psychological trauma risk, provide appropriate short- and long-term interventions and respond to demonstrated psychological needs of those impacted by a crisis.
- Deliver professional development to improve school and staff capacity to improve school climate and safety.
- Assist in measuring and interpreting school climate and safety data, and using those data to set annual goals.
- Foster effective collaboration with law enforcement, fire and rescue, outside mental health agencies, and cultural liaisons to improve coordination and efficient response and recovery.

### KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Engaging as early as possible with the key stakeholders most relevant to designing accountability is critical. Although specifics in each school district and state will vary, these stakeholders are likely to include:

- State chief school officers
- State/local school boards
- State governors and legislators
- District superintendents
- State/local school safety organizations

Additional details and contact information for various stakeholder groups can be found at [www.nasponline.org/essa/key-contacts.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/essa/key-contacts.pdf)

### RELEVANT RESOURCES

Resources related to ESSA and school psychological services are available on the NASP website (<http://www.nasponline.org/essa>). These resources include:

- Topic-specific ESSA fact sheets
- ESSA/MTSS/NASP Practice Model Crosswalk
- Resources and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education
- Information about specific funding sources in ESSA
- NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide