



Federal Public Policy and Legislative Platform

The vision of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is that all children and youth access the learning, behavior, and mental health support needed to thrive in school, at home, and throughout life. NASP is committed to supporting the educational and mental health needs of all students, regardless of race, culture, linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, nationality, citizenship, disability, educational need, or other dimensions of identity. Furthermore, NASP is dedicated to advancing policy and practice that (a) provides adequate and equitable access to school psychologists and culturally responsive, comprehensive school psychological services aligned with the NASP Practice Model¹; (b) fosters positive, safe, supportive, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students; and (c) ensures a range of evidence-based supports to meet the academic, social–emotional, and mental and behavioral health needs of students. NASP affirms that all students are entitled to, and deserving of, a comprehensive and well-rounded education that affirms and validates the diversity of their cultural and individual differences, fosters resilience, and facilitates well-being and positive academic and mental health outcomes. It is imperative that every policy, procedure, system, and structure is grounded in equity in access, opportunity, and outcomes to effectively serve all students. At its core, education is a civil right, and while local and state policy and practice play a significant role in our public education system, the federal government can, and should, play a critical role in ensuring equity in access and shaping the national education landscape.

NASP is committed to (a) ensuring appropriate oversight and enforcement of all education and civil rights laws to advance equity and protect minoritized youth from discrimination and (b) securing maximum federal education and related investments for the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA); Title I, II, and IV of the ESSA; and other grants and programs (some of which are explicitly included in this document²) necessary for achieving our policy priorities. NASP is committed to evidence-based policy and practice, informed by high-quality research. As such, NASP urges sustained and increased investments for the National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences and Research, and Development and Dissemination to ensure rigorous research is conducted and made available to policy makers and practitioners to enable continuous improvement of practice.

The NASP Federal Public Policy and Legislative Platform represents key policy goals, grounded in our position statements, resolutions, and strategic plan, to be achieved via *Federal* legislation, regulations, and guidance. This document reflects a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, set of policies that will drive the advocacy of the organization and our members.

Remedy shortages in school psychology

With expertise in both education and mental health, school psychologists are uniquely qualified to help address the needs of students and schools. They help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally, and they partner with families, teachers, administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community. NASP recommends a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students in order to allow for the delivery of a full

¹ See <https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-practice-model>

² Unless otherwise noted, all federal programs are operated by the U.S. Department of Education.

continuum of school psychological services. The national ratio for the 2020–2021 school year is 1:1,162³, with some districts and states operating with ratios more than four times the recommendation⁴. Shortages in school psychology, like shortages in other related education and mental health professions, have the potential to significantly undermine the availability of high-quality services to students, families, and schools. Shortages include an insufficient supply of qualified school psychologists and school psychologists from diverse backgrounds, graduate faculty, and an insufficient number of positions within districts to meet the needs of students.

Funding Priorities

Maximum and sustained federal investments for the following programs:

- Mental Health Service Professionals Demonstration Grant
- School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program
- IDEA Part D State Personnel Development Grants
- IDEA Part D Personnel Preparation Grants
- Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Grant (HRSA)

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Supports efforts to prepare, recruit, and retain school psychologists and other school mental health professionals. Examples of such NASP-endorsed legislation include:
 - Mental Health in Schools Excellence Act, which authorizes partnerships between the U.S. Department of Education and institutions of higher education to create tuition grants for students enrolled in graduate preparation programs in school psychology or other school mental health professions.
 - Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools, which establishes a grant program to support partnerships between institutions of higher education and high needs local education agencies (LEAs) to support teaching, training, and employment of school psychologists, counselors, and social workers.
 - Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act, which authorizes grants to state education agencies (SEAs) and LEAs to increase access to school psychologists and other school-based mental health services providers at high-need public elementary and secondary schools.
- Expands existing, and ensures new, programs intended to increase the behavioral health workforce, explicitly including licensed and/or certified school psychologists as eligible candidates. Examples of such programs include:
 - National Health Service Corps Loan Forgiveness (HRSA)
 - Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grant (HRSA)
 - Minority Fellowship Program (SAMSHA)
- Authorizes financial incentives and supports institutions of higher education, with priority given to minority serving institutions, to build or expand graduate programs that prepare students for employment as school psychologists or other school mental health professionals.
- Authorizes financial incentives for institutions of higher education with demonstrated commitment to increasing the diversity of candidates for admission, to build or expand graduate programs that prepare students for employment as school psychologists or other school mental health professionals.
- Authorizes tuition grants or forgiveness programs to support appropriate graduate preparation needed to work as school psychologists or other school mental health professionals, including Grow Your Own programs.
- Reinstates subsidized federal student loans for graduate students.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

The U.S. Department of Education and other relevant agencies must:

³ Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey,” 2020–2021 V.1a.

⁴ NASP State Shortages Data Dashboard

- Prioritize technical assistance and guidance to support state and district efforts to *recruit and retain* school psychologists and other school mental health providers. Guidance and resources, developed in collaboration with national professional organizations, should:
 - Provide examples and case studies of ways SEAs and LEAs have addressed workforce shortages through Grow Your Own programs, respecialization/retraining efforts, recruitment and retention strategies, interstate compacts and other mechanisms to allow for credentialing reciprocity and increased ability to practice across state lines, and other effective strategies to increase access to school psychologists and other school employed mental health professionals.
 - Address strategies to promote increased racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity among the workforce.
 - Detail available federal funding sources that can be utilized to address workforce shortages.
- Clarify the types of federal financial aid available for professionals who enter respecialization or retraining programs in order to meet state credentialing requirements to practice as school psychologists.
- Ensure Federal data collections, including the Common Core of Data, maintain inclusion of full-time equivalent school psychologists as a distinct reporting category. Other federal data sets, including the Civil Rights Data Collection, should align data reporting categories and definitions to ensure more consistent data reporting and analysis of student outcomes.
- Convene an interagency task force focused on identifying short- and long-term federal strategies to improve access to school mental health services and address the workforce shortages.

Review, evaluate, and reconstruct or replace existing school structures, policies, and procedures to ensure equitable outcomes for all students.

For all students to have full access to a high-quality public education, existing structures, policies, and procedures must be routinely examined to determine which create barriers and disparate access and outcomes for some students and engage in immediate action to resolve inequity. This includes identifying and dismantling the racist, homophobic, and discriminatory structures that perpetuate inequity both in terms of access to resources (both in school and in the community) and outcomes for children, with careful attention given to students of minoritized and low income and economically marginalized backgrounds; students with disabilities; students experiencing homelessness; students in foster care; and other vulnerable populations. Furthermore, the federal government should continue to enact policy (and provide investments) to advance equity and support efforts that increase equitable access to resources, opportunity, and outcomes.

Funding Priorities

- Full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Maximum and sustained investments for the following existing federal programs:
 - Titles I-A, II-A, III-A, and IV-A of the ESSA
 - Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program
 - Impact Aid
 - Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program
 - Rural Education Achievement Program
 - Full Service Community Schools
 - Indian Education Formula Grant
 - TEACH Grants
 - Teacher Quality Partnership Grants
 - Head Start (HHS)
 - Preschool Development Grants (HHS)
- NASP opposes:
 - any effort to limit federal funding from being used to provide professional development on critical race theory, diversity, White privilege, mitigating implicit bias, culturally responsive and antiracist practices within the school context, and other critical concepts necessary to promote an antiracist and culturally responsive education system

- any effort to condition the receipt of federal funds on the restriction of instruction or discussion of equity, systemic racism, LGBTQ+ issues (including in health/sexuality education), or any other topic of relevance in K–12 schools and within the higher education system
- federal investments for any initiative that funnels public money to pre-K–12 schools that lack public accountability, require the loss or declination of rights afforded to students or families, or enable discriminatory practices

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Helps to remedy structural inequity, improve opportunity and access to resources for underserved groups, and dismantle discriminatory practices, including:
 - Keeping Our Promise to America’s Children Act, which mandates full funding of Title I-A and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act;
 - Universal Childcare and Early Learning Act, which authorizes funds to expand universal preschool and other high quality early learning opportunities;
 - Educators for America Act, which would make amendments to the Higher Education Act to build the capacity of educator preparation programs to ensure that all students have access to diverse, profession-ready educators;
 - Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act, which would prohibit the use of conversion therapy; and
 - The Equality Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system.
- Directs close examination of existing federal funding formulas and other mechanisms by which federal funds are distributed to identify any needed changes to ensure federal funds are distributed equitably, reach schools and communities of greatest need, and do not contribute to segregation on the basis of race, ethnicity, or economic status or disparate access to federal resources.
- Maintains the use of federal school accountability systems that are oriented toward a culture of improvement, supports equitable education opportunities by creating a system that identifies and corrects systemic reasons for chronic low performance among particular groups of students, and utilizes a broad set of measures for student and school success.
- Incentivizes efforts to ensure that minoritized youth have equitable access to experienced and effective teachers who are serving in fields aligned to their areas of preparation and credentialing.
- Incentivizes colleges of education and other teacher preparation and educational leadership programs to include a deep understanding of the history of racism and discrimination within education and modern-day policies and practices that perpetuate it in all preservice training.
- Ensures access to gender affirming care, including care covered by Medicaid, Medicare, TriCare, and other federally supported insurance coverage.
- Creates clear standards of care (including access to food, water, and medical and psychological care and efforts to prevent family separation) for children and families (including unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers) placed in federal custody on their arrival to the United States.
- Allows undocumented students to remain in the country legally without fear of deportation.

NASP opposes:

- Federal policies or rules that place unnecessary burdens on students or families who are undocumented that may affect a student’s ability to benefit from a high-quality instructional environment, including fostering behavioral, social, and emotional well-being.
- Any efforts that would allow health providers to deny services to gender diverse students, prohibit school psychologists and other mental health professionals from discussing or providing information to students who may be questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, or punish parents for seeking out needed gender affirming care for their children.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

The U.S. Department of Education and other relevant agencies:

- Must maintain appropriate oversight and enforce existing policy related to school/LEA/SEA accountability for student achievement, including high school graduation; student discipline; providing free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities; protecting students from discrimination; and all civil rights laws.
- Should use available federal data sources (e.g., Civil Rights Data Collection, Common Core of Data) to routinely share data, and should use evidence-based strategies for remediation of under- and overidentification of groups of students in areas such as special education identification (disaggregated by IDEA category), eligibility for gifted education; exclusionary discipline, student arrest, access to advanced/AP courses, academic outcomes, including high school completion rates, and access to fully prepared teachers.
- Should provide resources and technical assistance that help ensure a stable education and availability of evidence-based support for children in transition, including homeless youth, children in foster care, migrant and refugee youth, and military connected youth.
- Provide information on the harms of mandatory retention policies and provide evidence-based alternatives to support students' academic progress.

Improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Funding Priorities

- Maximum and sustained investments for the National Center for Special Education Research and other federal research centers engaged in education-related research.
- Full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Maximum and sustained increases in federal programs that support the implementation of a robust multitiered system of supports, including but not limited to: Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV-A of ESSA.
- Recognizing a continuum of necessary supports based on degree of impairment, seek to secure federal funding that matches the level of student need specifically for evidence-based intervention.

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Mandates full funding of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (e.g., Keeping Our Promise to America's Children Act).
- Prohibits and prevents seclusion, mechanical restraint, chemical restraint, and dangerous restraints that restrict breathing, and prevents and reduces the use of physical restraint in schools (e.g., Keeping All Students Safe Act).
- Supports a successful transition to higher education by increasing availability of information on specific disability services at an institution of higher education (IHE) and streamlining the process to access services and accommodations for students with disabilities (e.g., RISE Act).
- Prohibits the use of the ability–achievement discrepancy model as an allowable method of identification of a student with a learning disability.
- Incentivizes evidence-based prevention and early identification practices, embedded within a multitiered system of supports, for students demonstrating developmental, academic, social–emotional, or mental and behavioral health (including adaptive behavior) delays or difficulties.
- Authorizes increased and new investments to allow for improved preservice training and ongoing professional development for all educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities and other students with diverse learning needs.
- Supports the right to a FAPE for unauthorized immigrant students with disabilities living in the United States.
- Directs relevant federal research centers and provides increased investments to support rigorous special education related research on topics including, but not limited to:
 - models of identification of specific learning disabilities,

- use of high-leverage practices,
- culturally responsive universal screening and early intervention practices, and
- progress monitoring.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

- Update Section 504 regulations and incorporate changes recommended by NASP and school psychologists⁵.
- Continue to provide guidance and resources to support schools in meeting their obligation to provide FAPE as defined in Section 504 and the IDEA as well as the intersection of other civil rights laws with disability rights laws (e.g., Title IX).
- Maintain appropriate oversight at the SEA and LEA levels to hold schools accountable for:
 - developing and implementing appropriately challenging and ambitious IEP goals that address a students' specific needs and allow for inclusion in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible;
 - ensuring students with disabilities are instructed by appropriately credentialed educators and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) in the least restrictive environment, as is appropriate based on their specific needs;
 - holding all students to high standards;
 - using alternative assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for *only* the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, not to exceed 1% of the student population;
 - addressing instances of disproportionality in special education referral or identification among students from racial and ethnic minoritized backgrounds;
 - meeting the academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of all student subgroups; and
 - reporting all data in a manner that is accessible and easy to understand.
- Issue guidance for accommodations for students with disabilities at institutions of higher education.

Ensure safe, supportive, affirming, and nondiscriminatory learning environments for all students.

Creating safe and supportive learning environments is essential to student achievement. Students who do not feel supported at school, or who cannot be their authentic selves, cannot learn to their fullest potential. Students' ability to learn is improved when students come to school feeling safe, welcomed, respected, and accepted; every student has a trusting relationship with at least one adult in the building; schools implement positive and effective discipline practices; and bullying, harassment, and discrimination are not tolerated and are consistently addressed. Positive conditions for learning are shaped by the attitudes, expectations, policies, and practices of school personnel and must be intentionally established, measured, and maintained.

Funding Priorities

- Maximum and sustained funding for high-quality, evidence-based, job-embedded, discipline-specific, and culturally responsive professional development for educators, SISP, and other relevant staff in areas including, but not limited to: implicit bias, antibullying, antiharassment, and antidiscrimination efforts. Existing grant programs include:
 - Title I-A, Title II-A, and Title IV-A of ESSA
 - Youth Mentoring Grant (OJJDP)
- To ensure students' civil rights are upheld and enforced, it is imperative that the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education has adequate human and financial resources to carry out its charge.

NASP opposes federal investments for the purposes of increasing the number of police in schools.

⁵ <https://www.nasponline.org/x59983.xml>

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Promotes positive school climate and affirming learning environments, free of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and physical discipline for all students, including:
 - The Equality Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in education and other areas of public accommodation.
 - Safe Schools Improvement Act, which requires LEAs to establish and enforce enumerated antibullying and harassment policies and practices.
 - Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools Act, which prohibits the use of corporal punishment for schools that receive federal funding.
- Reduces the use of exclusionary discipline practices and increases evidence-based strategies, including restorative practices, trauma-informed services, social–emotional learning, and others (e.g., Ending PUSHOUT Act).
- Prohibits the use of zero tolerance policies.
- Protects students’ right to express their gender identity, use and be called by their preferred names and pronouns, and access school activities and facilities that are consistent with their gender identity.
- Protects the ability of school psychologists, other school mental health professionals, and educators to maintain confidentiality when working with all students, except when the student discloses that they are at risk of harm to themselves or to others or if someone is harming them.

NASP opposes:

- Any effort to require a school mental health provider or other educator to disclose personal health information about a student (e.g., gender identity or sexual orientation) without explicit consent from the student.
- Any effort to define sex solely on the basis of biological sex.
- Any effort to allow the use of invasive and unnecessary medical exams to confirm a student’s sex as a requirement for participation in school sponsored or related activity.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

- Advance efforts to ensure that Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 regulations clearly acknowledge that sex discrimination includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- Ensure that, using available federal data sets, the U.S. Department of Education routinely reports disciplinary data and school climate/safety initiatives disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status and the intersection of these identities, and hold LEAs/SEAs accountable for correcting policy and practice to remedy disparate outcomes or disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline.
- Ensure that the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant agencies maintain oversight and enforcement of all civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act, Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, IDEA, Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972).
- Continue the existing efforts of the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant agencies to designate and widely disseminate resources to help implement evidence-based, school-wide policies and practices that reduce bullying, harassment, violence, and discrimination for *all* students regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender (including identification and expression), sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency, immigration status, or any other dimension of identity.
- Maintain and widely disseminate resources that highlight evidence-based efforts to prevent child abuse and human trafficking and to provide culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and gender-responsive care to victims.

Advance evidence-based school safety and crisis response efforts that properly balance physical and psychological safety

NASP is committed to advancing school safety policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all students and staff, with particular attention to protecting the civil rights of those who experience inequity, racism, and injustice. Creating safe, secure, and peaceful schools free of violence in all forms requires a balance of physical and psychological safety.

Highly restrictive physical safety measures alone (e.g., metal detectors, armed security) may cause students to feel less safe and more fearful at school⁶, and it could undermine the learning environment⁷. In contrast, comprehensive school safety is supported when schools combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., visitor check in procedures, locked doors) with efforts to enhance psychological safety through positive school climate, improved student engagement, respectful and trusting relationships among students and staff, and support of overall student success. School safety and crisis teams should be multidisciplinary and trained to address the continuum of prevention, planning, response, and recovery with response and recovery building on ongoing positive behavior, risk assessment, safety, and mental health services⁸.

Funding Priorities

Congress must appropriate robust investments to:

- Support ongoing professional development for and the implementation of evidence-based and comprehensive approaches to school safety including, but not limited to: evidence-based threat assessment and management procedures; suicide prevention and response; violence prevention; crisis preparedness, response, and recovery; reporting systems; and effective coordination with first responders. Existing federal programs include:
 - Title II-A and IV-A of ESSA
 - STOP School Violence Program (Bureau of Justice Assistance)
 - Project SERV
 - Project Prevent
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (SAMHSA)
 - Project AWARE (SAMHSA)
 - Garret Lee Smith Suicide Prevention
- Expand rigorous research on school safety and security methods including:
 - Psychological impact of active shooter/armed assailant drills
 - Use of armed educators and/or security
 - Student surveillance systems and technology
 - Threat assessment
 - Violence prevention initiatives
 - School policing programs
- Enable increased research on gun violence.

NASP opposes federal investments for the purposes of:

- increasing the number of police in schools,
- arming teachers or other school employees (except for properly commissioned law enforcement officers), and
- increasing the number of police in schools.

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass and fund legislation that:

- Incentivizes evidence-based suicide prevention training for school staff and evidence-based, developmentally appropriate suicide prevention programming for students.

⁶ See: Bachman, R., Randolph, A., & Brown, B. L. (2011). Predicting perceptions of fear at school and going to and from school for African American and White students: The effects of school security measures. *Youth & Society*, 43(2), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X10366674>; Perumean-Chaney, S. E., & Sutton, L. M. (2013). Students and perceived school safety: The impact of school security measures. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(4), 570–588. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-012-9182-2>

⁷ See: Konold, T., Cornell, D., Shukla, K., & Huang, F. (2017). Racial/ ethnic differences in perceptions of school climate and its association with student engagement and peer aggression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(6), 1289–1303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0576-1>; Milam, A. J., Furr-Holden, C. D. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Perceived school and neighborhood safety, neighborhood violence and academic achievement in urban school children. *The Urban Review*, 42(5), 458–467. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-010-0165-7>

⁸ Framework for Safe and Successful Schools/NASP School Violence Prevention position statement

- Supports rigorous research to evaluate the effectiveness of school safety and violence prevention efforts, including:
 - School Safety Drill Research Act, which would authorize a study on the possible mental health effects of a lockdown drill or active shooter drill.
 - School Shooting Safety and Preparedness Act, which creates a federal definition for “school shooting” and establishes an annual report related to school shootings.
- Enables schools, LEAs, and SEAs to develop and implement equitable and comprehensive school safety policy and practice that:
 - balances physical and psychological safety,
 - prevents violence,
 - facilitates identification of and appropriate interventions for students at risk of harm to self or others, and
 - facilitates ongoing review and practice of crisis preparedness and response protocols.
- Supports increased training and technical assistance on behavior threat assessment and management protocols and other efforts to prevent targeted school violence (e.g., EAGLES Act).
- Creates resources highlighting best practices for school-based behavior threat assessment and management teams.
- Addresses the public health crisis of gun violence by:
 - requiring a comprehensive background check for all gun purchases,
 - banning weapons that can cause mass destruction in a short period of time, and
 - preventing those who are of immediate threat or danger to themselves or others from having access to firearms.
- Requires consistent data collection and public reporting related to school police at the federal, state, district, and school building levels, including data on school-initiated arrests and student discipline data disaggregated by race, gender, ethnicity, and disability status, as well as membership in other marginalized groups, and the intersection thereof.

NASP opposes efforts:

- To allow anyone other than a commissioned school resource officer (SRO) to be armed on school grounds.
- That prevent or limit a school’s ability to address a student deemed to be of risk of harm to themselves or others.
- To overly harden schools or to require physical security measures that are not evidence based or that do not increase actual or perceived safety.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

- The U.S. Department of Education and other relevant federal agencies should:
 - Issue subregulatory guidance regarding the intersection of civil rights laws and a school’s obligation to keep students safe.
 - Release guidance on proper use of school police and provide examples of comprehensive memoranda of understanding in alignment with positions⁹
 - Ensure that any federal resource that addresses the use of behavior threat assessment and management address the following:
 - ☞ appropriate and inappropriate uses of behavior threat assessment and management;
 - ☞ importance of multidisciplinary threat assessment team that includes a school-employed mental health professional (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers) and a member of a student’s IEP/Section 504 team (if applicable);
 - ☞ proper data storage to ensure records do not follow the student inappropriately;
 - ☞ responsibility of schools to uphold civil rights laws and those afforded to students served under IDEA, including but not limited to:
 - safeguards to ensure special education procedures are followed,
 - proper documentation and consideration of student’s disability (if applicable),

⁹ NASP Resolution on Policing in Schools, available at <https://www.nasponline.org/x59798.xml>

- processes to assess the function of a behavior and establish supports,
- procedures for disciplinary removals and interim alternative educational placement, and
- parent notification, consent, appeals/due process;
- ☞ parameters for access to and use of a student’s educational record; and
- ☞ appropriate/inappropriate role of law enforcement (including school resource officers).
- The Civil Rights Data Collection should collect and report on data related to the use of threat assessments including, but not limited to:
 - Number of threat assessments conducted
 - Demographic information—such as sex, race, ethnicity, disability status (including if served by IDEA or Section 504), sexual orientation, gender identity—to allow for disaggregated data analysis
 - Composition of threat assessment team
 - Outcomes of threat assessment
 - Training, if any, provided to team members

Increase equitable access to comprehensive, culturally responsive school mental and behavioral health services.

Mental and behavioral health and wellness are critical to children’s and youth’s success in school and life. Schools are a natural and logical setting to provide mental health services, and they provide the ideal context for wellness promotion, prevention, and intervention, all of which directly affect learning and well-being. Comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services are most effective when embedded within a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) framework and when schools have adequate ratios of school psychologists¹⁰, school counselors, and school social workers, coupled with effective and collaborative community partnerships to provide supplemental services and promote access to community supports beyond the school day (specific policy priorities to address workforce needs are outlined earlier in this document).

Equally important is supporting educator wellness and preventing burnout. Educator wellness is linked to more effective teaching, improved student learning and student wellness and reductions in staff turnover and attrition. Supporting staff wellness is particularly critical following a crisis event (e.g., COVID-19) when educators, especially school mental health providers who often provide significant mental and behavioral health support to school communities, may be at greater risk of secondary trauma.

Funding Priorities

Congress must appropriate robust funding for:

- Existing programs that support expanded professional development and increased access to social–emotional learning and comprehensive school mental health services including:
 - Title 1-A, Title II-A and Title IV-A of ESSA
 - IDEA
 - Project Aware
 - Full Service Community Schools
 - Mental Health Awareness and Training Grants (SAMSHA)
- Evidence-based universal screening for social, emotional, or mental health concerns.
- Development and implementation of sustainable employee wellness and burnout prevention policy and practice.

¹⁰ School Psychologists: Qualified Health Professionals Providing Child and Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Health Services, https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/WP_Qualified%20Mental%20and%20Behavioral%20Health%20Professionals_2021%20Update-6pages.pdf

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Supports development, implementation, and evaluation of culturally responsive comprehensive school mental health services (e.g., Comprehensive Mental Health in Schools Pilot Program).
- Promotes effective school community partnerships as outlined in this brief¹¹.
- Reduces disparities in access to mental health services among minoritized populations (e.g., Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act).
- Advances efforts to increase funding to support evidence-based, trauma-informed practices in schools (e.g., Rise from Trauma Act).
- Explicitly recognizes school psychologists as school mental health providers.
- Promotes family engagement in and understanding of the importance of school mental health services.

NASP opposes any effort to:

- Limit a school's ability to provide mental and behavioral health care, including the use of universal screenings.
- Prohibit social–emotional learning curricula.
- Require school psychologists and other mental health professionals to share personal information without the student's explicit consent (notwithstanding the limits of confidentiality).

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

- The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, must issue updated guidance to assist schools in utilizing Medicaid to increase mental and behavioral health service delivery. This guidance, and all subsequent information pertaining to school mental health and Medicaid, must explicitly acknowledge that school psychologists can be considered as qualified providers of mental and behavioral health and must provide examples of how LEAs utilize these professionals in school Medicaid programs.
- Federal agencies who award grants intended to improve school mental health service delivery through school–community mental health partnerships:
 - supplement, not supplant, existing school-based services;
 - clearly articulate the roles of school-employed and community-employed mental health professionals; and
 - foster coordination and collaboration between school and community mental health professionals.
- Demonstrate, through guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant agencies, how various funding streams can be used to provide ongoing, high-quality professional development related to effective delivery of high-quality comprehensive mental health services.
- Share, via case study, webinars, and other technical assistance, effective service delivery models used by LEAs and SEAs to support student mental health.
- Protect the existing structure of Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program to ensure that children from low-income backgrounds have access to comprehensive healthcare that includes mental and behavioral health.

Ensure that all students have equitable access to comprehensive learning supports, provided by qualified SISP, within an integrated service delivery system (e.g., MTSS).

Comprehensive learning supports that integrate academics, behavior, mental health, and social–emotional learning are most effective when provided through an MTSS that incorporates high-quality core curricula, prevention, and wellness promotion; universal screening to identify students at risk for academic, social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties; ongoing progress monitoring and data-based decision making; and the availability of a continuum of evidence-based interventions. Essential to this system are school-employed mental health professionals and other SISP who collaborate

¹¹ Effective School Community Partnerships to Support School Mental Health, <https://www.nasponline.org/x57108.xml>

with educators, administrators, families, and community providers to identify needs and provide appropriate services at individual, classroom, building, and district-wide levels.

Funding Priorities

Congress must provide robust funding for:

- Title I-A, Title II-A, Title-IV-A of ESSA
- IDEA Part B and C
- IDEA Personnel Preparation Grants
- IDEA Personnel Development
- LEARN Comprehensive Literacy Program
- Education Innovation and Research Program
- Institute of Education Sciences, including National Center for Special Education Research

Legislative Priorities

Congress must pass legislation that:

- Supports the development of Grow Your Own programs to address shortages of specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., SISP Grow Your Own Act).
- Creates an Office of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel within the U.S. Department of Education to facilitate improved coordination and integration of service delivery for all students.
- Expands existing efforts to address teacher shortages to include SISP.
- Explicitly acknowledges the role of SISP in proposals that address literacy, social–emotional learning, school climate, and other factors that promote student learning.

NASP opposes any effort:

- To limit or prohibit the use of social–emotional learning curricula or to make the receipt of federal funds contingent on the abolition of social–emotional learning practices.
- That exacerbates disparities in access to qualified educators among minoritized students.
- Promotes lower standards for the credentialing of educators.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with other federal agencies as appropriate, should:

- Continually update and disseminate guidance and technical assistance to support effective implementation of an MTSS framework that includes both academic and mental and behavioral health services (including trauma-informed practices and social–emotional learning). This guidance should include information on the importance and effective use of school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists) and other SISP in school-wide initiatives and in direct service delivery with students. This guidance should also address how progress monitoring and other data gathered via the MTSS process can be used to facilitate decisions regarding eligibility for special education.
- Develop and disseminate resources highlighting a range of evidence-based interventions to address the full range of student needs.
- Provide resources and technical assistance to support the implementation of well-rounded, culturally responsive, and antiracist curricula.

Promote increased family engagement to support student success

School and student success is enhanced by positive and sustained family engagement. When done well, the beneficial effects are seen both within and outside school walls. Successful school–family partnerships are built on a foundation of

trust and an understanding that educators and families are equal partners in ensuring student success. Genuine, sustained collaboration requires intentionality, shared commitment and accountability, mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, and an equal voice for all parties. Opportunities for family engagement must be culturally and linguistically responsive and must account for family life realities that might impede engagement, such as work schedules, child care, and transportation, to ensure maximum participation for all families.

Funding Priorities

Congress must provide robust funding for:

- Statewide Family Engagement Centers
- IDEA Parent Training and Information Centers
- Efforts to support ongoing and sustained family engagement at the school, district, and SEA levels

NASP opposes any effort that seeks to limit family involvement in key education related decisions.

Regulatory, Guidance, and Informational Priorities

The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with other federal agencies as appropriate, should:

- Develop and disseminate resources highlighting a range of evidence-based models for effective family engagement.
- Ensure the importance of family engagement is highlighted in all relevant documents and resources.