

Support for Safe and Healthy Behaviors

ND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Behavioral Health in Education Resources and Opportunities (B-HERO)

In the 2019 Legislative Session, SB 2149 established that all K-12 schools in North Dakota identify a Behavioral Health Resource Coordinator (BHRC) each fall, and that the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services' Behavioral Health Division will provide behavioral health resources to these identified individuals (SB 2313). The Behavioral Health Division continues to partner with the Central Regional Education Association to provide these resources through the B-HERO program. Every fall, schools in North Dakota must designate a Behavioral Health Resource Coordinator and report it to the Department of Public Instruction. Throughout the school year, B-HERO then provides training and technical assistance to identified BHRC's and schools on a variety of behavioral health topics through weekly messaging, training courses, and professional development opportunities. Topics include Suicide Prevention, Restorative Practices, Trauma, Crisis Prevention and Response, School mentoring and relationship programs, etc. During the 2024-2025 school year, 1,145 educators from 58 schools attended B-HERO hosted or sponsored trainings. Thus far in 2025-2026, 170 have been served.

Behavioral Health School Grant

During the 2019 legislative session, the Behavioral Health Division was allocated funds to provide behavioral health services and support grants to school districts or special education units to address locally identified behavioral health needs of students. School districts or special education units that bill Medicaid for school-based services on a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) during the previous school year are eligible. Throughout the 2023-2025 biennium, over \$7 million was allocated to eligible school districts or special education units to address student behavioral health and professional development needs. During the 2025-2027 biennium, \$9.5 million is available to eligible districts or units. As of October 7, 2025, 21 of 30 eligible districts or units have applied for funds totaling over \$3.8 million. Nearly 65% of this funding is going to direct services for students. Other categories include behavioral health related professional development for staff, assessments, sensory tools, and curriculum.

Prevention and Early Intervention Pilot Grant

The Prevention and Early Intervention Pilot Grant was developed to improve children's behavioral health in the school setting. The goal of the project was to learn with schools on

how to fully integrate a continuum of supports that could be tailored to each school's unique needs. The pilot started in 2018 at Simle Middle School in Bismarck and expanded to a rural and tribal school in 2020 to include Barnes County North and Dunseith. Funding continues to support Barnes County and Dunseith in providing direct behavioral health services to students in need, and to support sustainability efforts. In partnership with Simle Middle School, three toolkits were developed and are available to schools who would like assistance in building their multi-tiered systems of support within their school. The division also contracts with Riehl and Associates to support schools who would like additional guidance in implementation without charge.

Parents Lead Suicide Prevention and Response Toolkit for Schools

The Parents Lead Suicide Prevention Toolkit was created to support professionals working in schools by providing practical resources and strategies to strengthen suicide prevention and response efforts. Research shows that three out of four students in North Dakota report feeling safe and supported at school. (ND 2023 YRBS) Building on this foundation, the toolkit is designed to help educators, school staff and other professionals deepen those connections, ensuring that every student feels seen, heard and supported.

The goal is to equip schools with the tools and guidance needed to implement effective suicide prevention and crisis response strategies that promote safety, resilience, and hope. At the beginning of September, the toolkit was sent out to over 12,000 school-based professionals within North Dakota. The next phase will focus on collaboration and training with schools across North Dakota to ensure effective implementation. This includes supporting school professionals in reviewing materials, integrating suicide prevention strategies into crisis response plans, promoting Parents Lead and 988 resources, strengthening connections with students and establishing consistent approaches to prevention, intervention, and postvention throughout the state.

North Dakota Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program (PMHCA)

In 2023, the North Dakota Behavioral Health Division (BHD) was awarded the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which continues through September 2026. During the 2024 federal year, \$376,000 was invested to strengthen behavioral health efforts within North Dakota schools. To date, \$831,109 in total funding from 2023–2026 has been awarded to the Central Regional Education Association (CREA) to expand behavioral health supports for educators, students, and families.

Through this partnership, CREA provides professional development and technical assistance to school staff in areas such as Check and Connect, CHAMPS, trauma-informed practices, relationship building, Safe and Civil Schools, behavioral interventions and supports, and suicide prevention.

In the 2024–2025 school year, grant funding supported the hiring of a Care Coordinator within Bismarck Public Schools and the purchase of Behavior Advantage, a positive behavior intervention planning system.

Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS)

Through System of Care Grant funding, the Behavioral Health Division has partnered with Sanford Research North to train North Dakota mental health professionals and school personnel in SPARCS. SPARCS is an evidence-based, 16 session group therapy program for adolescents aged 12-21 who have experienced chronic stress or trauma. Project SPARCS aims to increase access to high quality, culturally appropriate, and evidence-based treatment for youth experiencing chronic stress in Regions 3 (Devils Lake) and 7 (Bismarck) and tribal communities within these regions and build sustainable infrastructure to continue services. During the 2024-2025 school year, 36 mental health professionals and school personnel were trained to deliver the model across 13 sites in North Dakota, including schools, human service centers, and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities. 26 groups were held across these sites, impacting 159 youth. The 2025-2026 cohort just completed training at the beginning of October with 43 professionals trained across 12 sites. As of September, 4 groups have started with 29 youth, while the remaining 8 will start in October.

System of Care Service Grants

BHD awarded 19 Children’s Behavioral Health Service Grants, obligating \$3.4 million through the System of Care grant initiative. The goal of the service grants were to support and empower regional and local innovation to fill service and system gaps for children with Serious Emotional Disturbance and their family. This grant opportunity was open to schools, behavioral health agencies, and other providers that serve children, adolescents, and young adults, birth through age 21, with behavioral health conditions and their families in the System of Care regions (Regions 3 and 7). The following grant awards were provided to local school districts, April 2024-September 2025.

- **Belcourt Education Resource Center** (\$66,280, Belcourt, ND): To support the implementation of trauma-informed evidence-based practices for professionally licensed mental health care providers and school and community members. The

grant will further work that has been initiated within the Turtle Mountain Schools as part of the Child HELP Partnership.

- **Belcourt School District** (\$128,092, Belcourt, ND): To support the Turtle Mountain Community School (TMCS) implementation of Belcourt Youth Activities Program and Healthy Living Project. In Summer 2024, the program anticipates serving 200 children and adolescents ages 6-17 through a 4-week program that includes mental health and substance use education, prevention, and skill building using the Seven Teachings approach.
- **Bismarck Public Schools** (\$170,334, Bismarck, ND): To support the development and implementation of services for students in the School Within a School (SWIS) and RenewEd settings. The grant will support the hiring of professional staff to provide services and support for students identified with behavioral health needs in the district.
- **Fort Totten School District** (\$115,611, Fort Totten, ND): To address the need for behavioral health services and support for youth at Four Winds High School within the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation. The grant will focus on hiring a Student Services Coordinator to be responsible for coordinating behavioral health services and transportation logistics for students. The grant will support the implementation of evidence-based mental health interventions to address trauma and improve overall well-being among Four Winds High School students.
- **Mandan Public Schools** (\$135,000, Mandan, ND): The grant will assist the district in expanding the scope of the current elementary Nexus-Path case manager to provide services for all students.

EDUCATION STANDARDS & PRACTICES BOARD

All teacher education colleges will provide mental health competency training (required 8/2016). Collaboration with DPI for resources for Higher Education. Continue to require mental health competency trainings for all individuals receiving licenses.

Analyze data to determine where training is given and provide support as needed. Provide license applicants with training options and work with higher education to ensure this training is complete upon graduation.

NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION

Update and disseminate model policies to public school districts. Review current NDSBA model policies against the latest research and state/federal requirements. Incorporate restorative practices, equity considerations, and trauma-informed approaches.

Offer policy review services that provides school districts with an optional policy audit to identify gaps or misalignments with best practices.

Host webinars, in-person workshops, and breakout sessions at the Annual Convention on effective discipline and safety strategies. Bring in national experts and state agency representatives for joint sessions.

Collect and share case studies from North Dakota districts with strong behavior and safety outcomes.

Integrate resource links into policy templates. Update student discipline, safety, and wellness policies to require staff and family access to behavioral health information.

Co-host events with the Governor's office and ND Department of Health & Human Services for board members and district leaders. Focus sessions on early identification, referral processes, and legal considerations.

Leverage NDSBA communication channels to highlight available behavioral health resources. Feature schools using these services successfully.

Advocate for sustainable funding. Support legislation that expands behavioral health access in schools without diverting K-12 instructional funds. Share data connecting mental wellness to improved learning time and outcomes.

CENTER FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Develop comprehensive onboarding course for parents and learning coaches to familiarize them with the virtual learning environment and available support resources. Course is in development and will be deployed no later than Spring 2026.

Evaluate and enhance the NDCDE onboarding course for students to ensure it adequately covers social and emotional support services. This review was performed this summer with new resources added on mental health support. This course has now been placed on a six-month review cycle to ensure it remains responsive to social, behavioral, and mental health trends we are seeing in our student population.

Create predictive models to identify students who may be at risk and develop targeted interventions to support them. Qualtrics has been purchased for predictive modeling and variables evaluated in the statistical analysis have been identified. Dashboards should be live by Spring 2026.

Deploy student intervention process in 2024-25, with long-term strategy of moving to MTSS. NDCDE's Student Support office developed a robust system for student

interventions including a weekly working group where teachers and counselors could work collectively on identifying appropriate responses to student concerns.

Enhance collaboration with and feedback from school district counselors on the NDCDE student intervention process and identification of additional supports needed for students at NDCDE. This is ongoing with our Student Support Office now receiving weekly reports of students behind pace and rapidly progressing through courses to connect with local schools and identify if solutions need to be instituted.

Align all NDCDE health courses to state priority standards and prioritize implementation of CBE in these courses. During standards alignment process, ensuring inclusion of age-appropriate content on mental health awareness and developing social skills. Middle school health has been evaluated and aligned. High school health is scheduled for this school year.

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Increase implementation of the academic and behavioral health frameworks (i.e., MTSS, trauma-informed practice) and provide resources for all students to succeed academically and behaviorally.

- Many of these resources are provided through the Afterschool Network and will now be implemented through the new 21st CCLC State Evaluator.
- Continue to increase awareness and participation in the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) model that provides schools a comprehensive approach to meeting the academic, social, and behavioral needs of all students by incorporating the model into TSI/CSI and literacy efforts. Host an annual Foster Care/ Homeless/ Neglected & Delinquent Liaison professional learning experience that includes guest speakers, relevant policy updates, and best practices. Continue to collaborate and attend/provide training with DHHS's Child and Family Services division to ensure educational stability for foster care students. Monthly connection with district Foster Care/Homeless Liaisons to provide training and collaboration opportunities regarding the best interest and requirements of meeting the educational needs of foster care students. Created Funding Your Plan guidance that included an entire section devoted to funding and supporting "High-Quality Instructional Materials" and "Integrated Student Supports" to help educators provide resources for all students to succeed academically and behaviorally. Increase assessment literacy to help with implementation and improvement of frameworks/accountability.

- Communicating ND A+ system of assessments role in, for example, MTSS by presenting at the ND MTSS annual conference and continually weaving in assessment literacy foundational knowledge when presenting or communicating about ND A+.
- Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS) – Contracted work with the American Institute for Research (AIR). They have trained a Cadre of Coaches in ND to teach and support schools in this work. The goal is to work within the MTSS structure analyzing data in the areas of attendance, behavior, and course completion to predict what students are at risk and may need intervention. The coaches help districts develop a catalog of interventions in each area and each level of MTSS response. Each year since 2020 there have been 2-3 districts per year selected to join the EWIMS work. Each school receives support for 2 years.
- Prevent-Teach-Reinforce (PTR) – NDDPI supported the funding for this strategy. Training and support was provided by CREA. The PTR model is a team-based, systematic, structured process for supporting students with challenging behaviors that have not been resolved satisfactorily with classroom and school wide behavior management systems.
- Building Assets and Reducing Risks – the BARR model is built on built on strategies that build intentional relationships, utilize real time data, and enable schools to achieve academic and non-academic outcomes for each and every student.
- MTSS Conference and Trainings – specifically those around MTSS-B
- Office of Specially Designed Services Focused Monitoring – when completing focused monitoring in districts the MTSS structure/system is often looked at and how it is working for students with disabilities. If not being done with fidelity or if FAPE is not being provided to students with disabilities in their current structure training and suggestions are offered.
- Work with the REAs that are providing training to ensure we build a strong Tier 2 that is core plus more, not replacement for core instruction.
- Write a state personnel development grant to continue funding EWIMS, possibly provide grants to schools that want to implement BARR. This grant would allow NDDPI to work with colleges to increase pre-service training to teachers in the areas of EWIMS and behavioral supports.
- Work with The Grad Partnership Intermediaries to build a coaching structure and training modules around EWIMS.