

NOAH WEBSTER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION MODEL POLICY

TO: TBD
FROM: Noah Webster Educational Foundation
RE: Roles and Responsibilities of Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools
DATE: TBD

This model policy aims to help school boards run smoothly by clarifying policies that promote student well-being through community and parental involvement.

Roles and Responsibilities of Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools

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BACKGROUND: School Districts are provided with funding to provide more mental health services to students; however, the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals within schools overlap or vary from district to district. This policy aims to help schools clarify the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals within the school system based on feedback from practicing professionals and definitions outlined by national organizations and professional boards. This policy corresponds to NWEF's Navigating Mental Health K-12, specifically, session two, [‘Roles and Responsibilities of Mental Health Professionals in Schools’](#).

LEGAL ADVISORY: The following policy was written based on research and guidance from mental health professionals and policy analysts. Noah Webster Educational Foundation is not a law firm, nor do they claim any legal expertise. Please consult with your school district’s attorney and individual state laws and codes when evaluating model policies from Noah Webster Educational Foundation.

Subject: Roles and Responsibilities of Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools

I. Description of Policy

This School Board/School Division, as required by state and federal governments, allocates a portion of its budget to employ mental health professionals in schools to promote the well-being of students. This policy outlines the appropriate roles of these professionals as well as the official capacities of other faculty and staff employed by the district in addressing the mental health of students:

- A. Educational Service personnel that support the health and mental health of the student population include, but are not limited to: school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and behavioral specialists/analysts.
- B. Teachers are not qualified as education service personnel to provide for or handle student health or mental health matters. As such, they should not be practicing any functions related to student mental health except when deemed necessary by qualified professionals, and only alongside the appropriate and qualified professional.

The roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals within public schools should align with state and federal guidelines, as well as the respective ethical guidelines and certifications of each field.

II. Purpose and Definitions

The purpose of schools within **[schoolboard district]** is to ensure that all students are provided with a general education of high quality.

The definitions in this policy establish the specific roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals practicing within [this school district] to best provide for the personalized and individualized needs of each student and the effectiveness of faculty and staff in delivering a high-quality general education. Listed below are the roles and responsibilities of the most common mental health professionals employed by this district:

- A. School Counselors are responsible for guiding students toward greater academic achievement strategies, helping students develop skills to manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills, and aiding students in planning for postsecondary options such as, but not limited to: workforce, the military, or higher education.¹
- B. School Psychologists are responsible for working collaboratively to provide direct support and interventions to students, consult with teachers, families, and other school-employed mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors, school social

¹ This definition was provided by the following resources: “The Role of the School Counselor,” American School Counselor Association, 2025, <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ee8b2e1b-d021-4575-982c-c84402cb2cd2/Role-Statement.pdf>; Noah Webster Educational Foundation [Navigating Mental Health K-12 training](#).

workers) to improve support strategies, work with school administrators to improve school-wide practices and policies, and collaborate with community providers to coordinate needed services. They may also provide short-term individual and group counseling. They should be trained in assessments and data collection in compliance with federal regulations to help schools identify needs when budgeting, and they should be certified in youth mental health to be qualified to provide training to school personnel.²

C. Social Workers are school-community liaisons responsible for identifying the needs of students and families and helping coordinate those needs through community resources. They may provide home visits, family support, help determine the eligibility of special education resources, meet with individuals and groups as needed, provide crisis support, and perform threat assessments, including self-harm threat assessments. They are not qualified or authorized to make mental health-related assessments or diagnoses.³

D. Behavioral Specialists/Analysts are specialized professionals who are responsible for working with students who qualify for tier three mental health intervention care. They are qualified to provide care for children with significant trauma, ADHD, or multiple diagnoses. They are trained to work with these students on coping skills within the classroom setting or outside. The setting of their work should be dependent on the preferences of the student, parent, teacher, school, and their professional recommendations.⁴

III. Procedures for Mental Health Treatments

No school mental health professional has the professional capability to provide long-term care counseling to students. Mental health professionals within the district are not authorized to prescribe medication or provide clinical diagnoses. All these functions, and any others outside the professional scope of practice of mental health professionals within the district, should be outsourced to qualified professionals in the community through collaboration with the student, their family, and the community to ensure the best quality of care is provided.

Mental health professionals within this district are prohibited from using techniques or providing services that are beyond the scope of their professional certification or training, including hypnosis or other psychotherapeutic techniques that are usually employed in medical or clinical

² This definition was provided by the following resources: “Who Are School Psychologists,” About School Psychology, Home, National Association of School Psychologists, n.d., <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists?nocache=1754490874116>; Noah Webster Educational Foundation [Navigating Mental Health K-12 training](#).

³ This definition was provided by the following resources: “Role of School Social Workers,” School Work Association of America, n.d., <https://www.sswaa.org/school-social-work>; Noah Webster Educational Foundation [Navigating Mental Health K-12 training](#).

⁴ This definition was provided by the following resources: National University Editorial Contributors, “Behavior Analyst: What Is a Behavior Analyst?,” National University, September 12, 2022, <https://www.nu.edu/blog/what-is-a-behavior-analyst/>; Noah Webster Educational Foundation [Navigating Mental Health K-12 training](#).

settings and focus on mental illness or psychopathology.

IV. Maintenance of Records

All information and records of social/emotional counseling are to be kept confidential and separate from the student's educational records and not disclosed to any third party without prior parental/guardian consent or as otherwise provided by law.