

NOAH WEBSTER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION MODEL POLICY

TO: TBD
FROM: Noah Webster Educational Foundation
RE: Needs Assessment Requirements for Mental Health Programs and Resources
DATE: TBD

This model policy seeks to improve the quality of mental health programs and resources in schools by conducting needs assessments that enable administrators to appropriately provide these opportunities.

Needs Assessment Requirements for Mental Health Programs and Resources

AUTHORS:

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BACKGROUND: School Districts that receive federal funding for mental health programs and resources should take action to identify which programs and resources would best benefit students in their schools. This policy aims to improve mental health programs and resources by requiring a needs assessment. Needs assessments are considered best practice among mental health professionals and are a general recommendation from the U.S. Department of Education to improve educational programs and resources. This model policy corresponds directly to NWEF's 'Navigating Mental Health K-12' training, specifically, Session Six, ['Advocacy and Action.'](#)

LEGAL ADVISORY: This model 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 does it claim any legal expertise. Please consult your school district's attorney and applicable state laws and codes when evaluating model policies from Noah Webster Educational Foundation.

Subject: Needs Assessment Requirements for Mental Health Programs and Resources

I. Definitions

All Definitions in this policy that are listed below are taken directly from the Needs Assessment Guidebook developed by the State Support Network by contract under the U.S. Department of Education.¹

A. Input Data includes information related to improvement plans, curriculum materials and supplies, training, resource allocation, and intervention programs.

B. Output Data information that demonstrates the outcomes or results, including student and teacher attendance, student achievement, program reviews, classroom observations, behavior referrals, and other similar information.

C. Demographic or Community Context Data includes information regarding contextual factors that the school may not be able to change, but could affect the implementation of policies and interventions such as student subgroup populations/demographics, local economic trends, student mobility, and overall enrollment patterns

II. Description of Policy

This School Board/School Division, as required by the state and federal government for the health and education of students, uses a portion of its budget to provide mental health programs and resources in its schools. To provide the most context appropriate mental health programs and resources to benefit the needs of the students within this district a needs assessment will be conducted. This policy outlines the appropriate timeline and framework that should be used to perform a needs assessment in accordance with established best practices.

A. School boards have an obligation to all stakeholders (parents, students, and the local community) to responsibly allocate funds to programs and resources that are appropriate for and benefit the specific needs of schools within the district.

B. While conducting needs assessments school districts should be informed by best practices and involve all relevant stakeholders in the process to ensure the wellbeing and benefit of students.

III. Performance of Needs Assessments

This School District should be performing student mental health needs assessments annually to properly allocate funds towards improving mental health programs and resources. A notification should be sent out each year to notify parents that a needs assessment will be conducted to provide transparency and allow parents the opportunity to opt their student out of the needs assessment. The needs assessment should be thorough and specific following the guidelines provided by this policy and informed by generally accepted best practices.

¹ Cary Cuiccio and Marie Husby-Slater, *Needs Assessment Guidebook*, State Support Network, May 2018, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/10/needsassessmentguidebook-508_003.pdf

IV. Framework for Administering Needs Assessments

School board members should adhere to a needs assessment process that meets the requirements of this provided outline. This outline was developed through guidance by the U.S. Department of Education and mental health professionals to ensure a clear set of standards. Per these sources this school district will make sure the following guidelines are met when conducting a needs assessment:

A. The school district will notify parents when conducting a needs assessment in regulation with the Protection of Pupils Rights Act (PPRA).²

B. All needs assessments must be context-specific, reflecting the needs, challenges, and gaps in the local community. To ensure needs assessments are context-specific, a diverse group of individual stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members) should be engaged and consulted throughout the process when appropriate. Appropriate times to engage stakeholders include planning, data collection, and needs identification. Organizational challenges and initiative implementations should also be thoroughly considered.³

C. Needs assessments should use rigorous data analysis and collection methods. These methods include input data, output data, and demographic/community context data.⁴

School board members will use the provided information to inform their conduction of a needs assessment including planning, data collection/implimentation, information interpretation, prioritization, and implementation.

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 may not be disclosed to any third party without prior written parental/guardian consent or as otherwise provided by law.

² The Protection of Pupils Rights Amendment can be found in the US Code as: 20 U.S. Code § 1232h. The full text of this policy can be found here:
[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:20%20section:1232h%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:20%20section:1232h%20edition:prelim))

³ Cary Cuiccio and Marie Husby-Slater, *Needs Assessment Guidebook*, State Support Network, May 2018, pg. 5-6, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/10/needsassessmentguidebook-508_003.pdf.

⁴ Ibid, 6.