



# Colorado Project AWARE Resource Collection

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## Introduction

### What is the Colorado Project AWARE Resource Collection?

This collection brings together a variety of resources developed through the work of the Colorado Department of Education's Project AWARE 2020 and 2022 grants. Each resource in this collection was developed in response to statewide needs and through collaborative efforts with state-level and local partners, educators, districts, and community organizations.

The purpose of this collection is to support the enhancement of school-based mental and behavioral health infrastructure across Colorado. While not exhaustive, the resources included in the collection provide practical supports aligned to the [Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging within Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#).

### What is the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging?

The [Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging within Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) is a comprehensive website for educators, administrators, and other education professionals who want to increase wellbeing and belonging in their schools. Its goal is to blend guidance, resources, systems, and best practices to improve outcomes for students, staff, and families across Colorado's PK–12 schools.

At the heart of the Landscape are five features—the foundational and interconnected components that every school system needs in order to create meaningful improvements in wellbeing and belonging. These features represent what's necessary to successfully navigate the complex landscape of health, safety, and prevention in Colorado schools.

For questions or to ask for additional support about the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging, please email [thelandscape@cde.state.co.us](mailto:thelandscape@cde.state.co.us).

### How can this collection be used?

#### Option 1: Explore the Features of Wellbeing and Belonging and Identify an Area of Focus

If you want to promote wellbeing and belonging within your school community (e.g., school, district, BOCES, Tribal Education Agency), but you are not sure where to start, you may want to explore the [Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Implementation Resources](#) first. These resources will help you identify an area of wellbeing and belonging to focus on and then support you and your team as you plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain your efforts.

#### Option 2: Explore Resources that Align with your Identified Areas of Focus

If you have already identified an area of focus and you are looking for resources to support that specific area, you may find it helpful to explore the resources provided in this collection. For questions or to ask for additional support on the resources in this collection, please email [coaware@cde.state.co.us](mailto:coaware@cde.state.co.us).

Additionally, you may find it helpful to navigate to a particular feature of wellbeing and belonging on the [Landscape website](#) and explore the resources linked under the essential elements of that feature.

## What resources are included in this collection?

In this collection, you will find the following resources, which were created by the Colorado Project AWARE 2020 and 2022 grants. You may click on the name of the resource to jump directly to that section of the collection.

- [Implementing Universal Mental Health Screening](#)
- [Recruiting and Retaining School-Based Mental Health Professionals](#)
- [Supporting Mental Health Literacy in Your System](#)
- [Strengthening Suicide Prevention in Your School Community](#)
- [Understanding Policies Related to School-Based Mental Health in Colorado](#)

## Disclaimer

This resource collection was made possible by grants H79SM083647 and H79SM087495 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by SAMHSA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government. In the collection resources, you may find links to documents and webpages created by other entities. The content of those documents and webpages is managed by entities outside of the Colorado Department of (CDE) and Colorado Project AWARE. External resources are provided for informational purposes only. The Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Project AWARE do not control the accuracy, legality, or content of information on non-CDE webpages or documents.

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## The Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Implementation Resources

### Overview

The Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Implementation Resources can help you plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain your efforts to improve wellbeing and belonging in your school community. The resources help you dive deeper into the five features of wellbeing and belonging:

- School Environment
- Relationships
- Health and Wellbeing
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competencies
- Engaging Learning Practices

### Resources

The Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Implementation Resources include online courses, self-assessments, and implementation guides.

### Online Courses

There are six online courses available to support your wellbeing and belonging implementation efforts. Wellbeing and belonging initiatives are most effective when implemented across the school community through team-driven shared leadership. While you can engage in the courses as an individual, we recommend that you engage in the course with a team. When that is not possible, consider ways to bring ideas from the courses back to your school community.

It is suggested that you start with [The Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Within Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports course](#) first. This course will introduce the Landscape and describe how to implement the Landscape within [Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#). This course will also provide an overview of the stages and steps for implementation, which will be explored further in each of the courses on the five features of wellbeing and belonging.

After completing the introductory course, you may find it helpful to take an optional [Overall Landscape Self-Assessment](#) on the five features of wellbeing and belonging. The results of the optional Overall Landscape Self-Assessment may help you decide which of the five features courses you want to take first. You may also make that decision based on data you have already analyzed or needs you have already identified in your school community. You can engage in any of the five features courses in any order, and you do not have to complete all of the five features courses.

In each of the five features courses, you will explore the essential elements of the feature and begin planning how to implement the essential elements in your school community. Below are links to the five features courses:

- [School Environment Course](#)
- [Relationships Course](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Course](#)
- [Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competencies Course](#)
- [Engaging Learning Practices Course](#)

## Self-Assessments

There are six self-assessments available to help you and your team assess the current implementation efforts related to wellbeing and belonging in your system (e.g., school, district, BOCES, Tribal Education Agency). The self-assessments also help you narrow your focus and prioritize your efforts. You may access all the self-assessments in [this folder](#). You can make a copy of the self-assessments so you can edit them online. You may also download or print the self-assessments.

### Which feature should you start with?

The [Overall Landscape-Self-Assessment](#) assesses the current level of implementation of each of the five features of wellbeing and belonging in your system. The results of this self-assessment can help you and your team decide which of the five features you want to focus on first.

### Which essential elements within that feature should you focus on first?

The following feature-specific self-assessments assess the current level of implementation of the essential elements within that feature. The results of these self-assessments can help you and your team decide which of the essential elements in that feature you want to focus on first.

- [School Environment Self-Assessment](#)
- [Relationships Self-Assessment](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Self-Assessment](#)
- [Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competencies Self-Assessment](#)
- [Engaging Learning Practices Self-Assessment](#)

## Implementation Guides

There is a supplemental implementation guide for each of the five features of wellbeing and belonging. The implementation guides are designed to support you and your team with brainstorming, capturing your ideas, accessing relevant tools, and planning the next steps to promote the five features of wellbeing and belonging in your school community. You may access the implementation guides in [this folder](#). You can make a copy of the implementation guides so you can edit them online. You may also download or print the implementation guides.

## Implementing Universal Mental Health Screening

### Overview

**Universal mental health screening** refers to the proactive, purposeful use of a screening tool or process that assesses all students in order to identify mental health needs and strengths and results in a response (at the individual, classroom, or school-wide level). Mental health screening yields school-wide results that can be valuable in guiding prevention strategies and identifying staff training needs. Early identification of students with needs for support is more likely to lead to positive outcomes for those students. Learn more about the importance of mental health screening in schools from this [summary of the research](#).

The goal in creating the Colorado Mental Health Screening Toolkit document was to sift through existing toolkits and guidance documents to present the common themes and clarify potential points of confusion. Implementation of mental health screening is not necessarily a linear process and to enact all the components recommended across the different existing guidance documents can take time and resources that may feel overwhelming or unavailable. The Toolkit aims to clearly outline the steps required for conducting screening and provide access to tools that support schools and districts in following these steps.

### Connections to the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

The resources in the Implementing Universal Mental Health Screening folder most directly connect to the **Screening and Assessment for Health and Wellbeing** essential element of the **Health and Wellbeing** Landscape feature. Various components of other Landscape features are also touched on in these resources. For example, social emotional skills (the **Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competencies** feature) and **Relationships** are both included as positive wellbeing factors that may be assessed as part of mental health screening. In addition, the importance of also assessing school climate (**School Environment**) when conducting mental health screening is highlighted in the Screening Toolkit document.

### Resources

You can find the following resources in the [Implementing Universal Mental Health Screening folder](#).

- **Colorado Universal Mental Health Screening Toolkit:** The toolkit document that provides detailed information on how to carry out mental health screening, from steps to consider before starting with screening through follow-up steps and continuous improvement
- **Favorite Guidance Document Folder:** Contains the guidance documents most frequently used in creating the Universal Mental Health Screening Toolkit
- **Other Source Documentation Folder:** Contains additional resources used in creating the Universal Mental Health Screening Toolkit
- **School Climate Information + Tools Folder:** Contains documents that provide information on how to assess school climate
- **Screening Tool Listings Folder:** Contains documents with listings and descriptions of a variety of mental health screening surveys
- **Toolkit Supplemental Documents Folder:** Folder with additional documents that are linked in the Universal Mental Health Screening Toolkit

## Recruiting and Retaining School-Based Mental Health Professionals

### Overview

The Summary: Colorado School-Based Mental Health Inquiry Project summarizes findings from the School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Professional Inquiry Project, conducted by the University of Denver PRISMS Collaborative with Colorado Project AWARE. Drawing on input from over 200 school psychologists, social workers, and counselors, the summary highlights the benefits of strong school mental health staffing as well as barriers such as workload, role confusion, compensation, and licensure challenges. The summary identifies seven key factors shaping recruitment and retention and offers evidence-based actions, tools, and a leader self-assessment checklist.

To extend this work, two companion resources have been developed: a career pathways guide to help youth and prospective professionals understand training, licensure, and career options in SBMH, and a retention best practices guide to provide administrators and human resources leaders with clear strategies to support, clarify, and sustain SBMH roles. Together, these resources aim to build a stronger pipeline into the profession and ensure the conditions for school mental health professionals to thrive.

### Connections to the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

These resources align with the Landscape by advancing staff and student wellbeing systems across all five features of wellbeing and belonging. Specifically, these resources offer strategies to recruit, retain, and support school-based mental health professionals who are essential to sustainable wellbeing efforts in schools. Recruiting and retaining SBMH professions helps to strengthen mental health supports through evidence-based actions that improve access to care, reduce crises, and ensure students with diverse needs receive timely support.

### Resources

You can find the following resources in the [Recruiting and Retaining School-Based Mental Health Professionals folder](#).

- **Colorado School-Based Mental Health Inquiry Project Folder:**
  - Summary: Colorado School-Based Mental Health Inquiry Project
  - Want more details on the research findings? Check out the following two documents:
    - CO SBMH Inquiry Project 1.0
    - CO SBMH Inquiry Project 2.0
- **Your Path to a Career in School-Based Mental Health: A Guide for Colorado Youth:** This guide introduces Colorado youth to school-based mental health careers, outlining roles, education requirements, licensure pathways, and career planning resources.
- **Retention Best Practices Guide for School-Based Mental Health Professionals Folder:**
  - Contains an action-oriented guide with proven strategies to help districts support and retain school health professionals. Additional templates and resources are also included in the folder.

## Strengthening Suicide Prevention in Your School Community

### Overview

Suicide is a leading cause of death in Colorado and has a deep impact on Colorado communities. While honoring those who have died by suicide, we also want to acknowledge that Coloradans are resilient. Implementing suicide prevention best practices can bolster protective factors and foster resilience for youth and adults.

Suicide is a community issue: everyone has a role in creating communities where all can thrive. Schools are an important part of community-based suicide prevention. Suicide prevention should not be a stand-alone effort; it should be integrated and aligned with broader efforts to promote mental health, such as bullying prevention, positive school climate, and wellbeing and belonging initiatives. School-based suicide prevention should address the mental health of all those within the school system, including staff, students, parents, and caregivers.

### Connections to the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

All five features of wellbeing and belonging are essential to strengthening suicide prevention in your school community. In particular, creating a positive **School Environment** rich with supportive **Relationships** between students, staff, and families, and ensuring schools promote the **Health and Wellbeing** of everyone in the school community are integral to suicide prevention.

### Resources

You can find the following resources in the [Strengthening Suicide Prevention in Your School Community folder](#).

- **Suicide Prevention Sample Policy:** This is an optional, sample policy that can be adapted and adopted by school districts based on their unique contexts and needs. This policy is intentionally broad, allowing districts the flexibility to align it with their existing systems, supports, and structures while ensuring a consistent commitment to student safety. This is not a policy of the Colorado Department of Education, nor is it a required policy for school districts. School districts should consult with their own legal counsel to determine appropriate language that meets local circumstances and needs.
- **Colorado Suicide Prevention Policy Implementation Guide:** This guide synthesizes and consolidates best practices and resources for suicide prevention in schools. The guide is intended to simplify and support the formalization of existing suicide prevention practices and procedures and to enhance consistency across Colorado schools.

## Supporting Mental Health Literacy in Your System

### Overview

**Mental health literacy** is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that help people understand mental health, reduce stigma, recognize when support is needed, and know how to access help. In schools, building mental health literacy fosters supportive environments, promotes early intervention, and strengthens student wellbeing and success. Classroom WISE (Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators) is a free, evidence-informed curriculum that offers practical strategies for educators to promote mental health literacy and create classrooms where all students can thrive.

### Connections to the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

Implementing or supporting mental health literacy—whether through Classroom WISE or another approach—directly aligns with the **Health and Wellbeing** feature by fostering a **culture of prevention**. It also supports the **Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competencies** feature by creating opportunities for **educator skill-building**.

### Resources

You can find the following resources in the [Supporting Mental Health Literacy in Your System folder](#).

- **Recorded Lunch and Learn Presentation:** An overview of Mental Health Literacy and Classroom WISE
- **Mental Health Literacy Implementation Slide Deck:** Designed to help guide discussions and/or facilitate implementation efforts in your system
- **Mental Health Literacy Resource Guide:** A variety of resources intended to help support the critical considerations of mental health literacy implementation

## Understanding Policies Related to School-Based Mental Health in Colorado

### Overview

This resource is a set of three companion guides that explain federal, state, and local policies shaping school-based mental health in Colorado. Each guide is tailored for a different audience—caregivers, school-based mental health providers, and community partners—to make policy language more accessible and relevant to their role.

The guides summarize rights (e.g., IDEA, Section 504, FERPA), funding opportunities (e.g., School Health Services Medicaid program, School Health Professional Grant, Behavioral Health Recovery Act), and safety mandates (e.g., Safe Schools Act, Claire Davis Act, bullying prevention laws). They also highlight new and ongoing state programs, such as the I Matter Program, the School-Based Mental Health Support Program, and licensure compacts for social workers and psychologists.

### Connections to the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

These resources align with the Landscape by advancing **Health and Wellbeing**—making it easier to access school-based mental health supports such as Medicaid, I Matter, and state grant programs—and by strengthening the **School Environment** through clear explanations of safety mandates that create secure, supportive schools.

### Resources

You can find the following resources in the [Understanding Policies Related to School-Based Mental Health in Colorado folder](#).

- **School-Related Behavioral Health Policies for Caregivers:** A caregiver’s guide to understanding school policies, rights, and services that support student learning, health, and mental wellbeing in Colorado
- **School-Related Behavioral Health Policies for Community Providers:** A guide for community partners working in schools that summarizes key federal and Colorado policies shaping student behavioral health services, including mental health programs, privacy rules, safety requirements, and funding supports
- **School-Related Behavioral Health Policies for School-Based Mental Health Providers:** A practical guide to the laws, funding streams, and professional requirements school-based mental health providers need to navigate student behavioral health in Colorado schools