

Partnering with State Education Agencies to Enhance Children’s Physical and Mental Well-Being

Why Partner with State Education Agencies? Schools are optimal environments for promoting children’s health, with 95% of U.S. children attending schools for roughly 6 hours each day. In school, children not only learn about healthy behaviors, but also practice them through opportunities such as physical education, recess, school meals and relationships with peers and adults. Partnering with SEAs is an ideal opportunity to impact children’s health and begin cultivating life-long healthy behaviors. In 2023, 20 entities (many of whom are SEAs) were awarded a five-year cooperative agreement to protect and improve the health and well-being of school-age children and adolescents in underserved and disproportionately affected communities. [See the recipients here.](#)

NACDD’s School Health Program: NACDD, in partnership with Child Trends and Mental Health America, is partnering with State Education Agencies (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEA) (i.e., school districts) to advance health equity in schools through supports for developing, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based policies, practices, and programs focused on the emotional well-being of students and staff. Each year, NACDD engages a cohort of two to four SEAs, their respective State Health Department partners, and five to eight LEAs within participating states. Each cohort participates in a five-step process over the course of two school years:

Step	Description
1) Assess	Assess the needs of students, school staff, and emotional well-being supports (e.g., existing partnerships, policies, practices, and programs).
2) Plan	Develop an LEA-focused action plan based on assessment results to address gaps in emotional well-being supports, with a focus on the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, components of comprehensive school mental health, and other school priorities (e.g., district strategic plan).
3) Implement	Implement action plans to enhance or increase school-based social, emotional, mental and/or behavioral health supports for students and school staff with ongoing TA from NACDD, Child Trends and Mental Health America.
4) Learn	Learn through intensive PD and TA provided by NACDD, CT, and MHA that includes a Training of Trainer (ToT) cadre, other training, and evidence-based tools and resources related to social-emotional competencies, skill development that is culturally responsive, equitable, and inclusive, and student and school staff emotional well-being and mental health. Each year, NACDD and its partners provide PD opportunities on at least four topics and meets regularly with SEA and LEA teams separately and together to provide TA, engage in peer-to-peer learning, share successes, and navigate challenges.
5) Evaluate	Evaluate efforts to make course corrections and sustain action plan activities.

Questions? Visit NACDD School Health, <https://chronicdisease.org/page/schoolhealth/>, or contact Heidi Milby, Associate Director for the Center for Advancing Healthy Communities, at hmilby@chronicdisease.org.

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