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## CalMHSA Program Partner Spotlight

### California County Superintendents Educational Services Association's Regional K-12 Student Mental Health Initiative

**Regional K-12**  
**Student Mental Health Initiative**  
*Education • Prevention • Collaboration*

Bad grades. Dropping out. Behavioral problems. The consequences of unidentified mental health issues on young people and the school environment are serious. The good news is that research-based strategies are effective in preventing negative behaviors associated with mental health issues and helping young people receive assistance.

Through a statewide partnership with the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is making it possible for schools to:

- Connect students with appropriate and timely referrals for their mental health needs
- Offer prevention and early intervention services and supports, working with county and community-based agencies
- Promote youth development and wellness
- Improve school climates for learning

CCSESA works with 58 [County Superintendents of Schools](#) to design and implement statewide programs that support school districts in delivering student services, curriculum, training, and other programs.

Schools are in a unique position to improve student wellness – students typically spend 6 hours a day and 175 days a year on school campuses. Recognizing the power schools have to change students' lives for the better, CCSESA's comprehensive prevention and early identification approach starts with preschool and elementary school, working with schools to foster a learning environment that nurtures and supports students. Programs also impart the skills and abilities students need to respond to situations in ways that aren't detrimental to students' mental health.



CCSESA's Regional K-12 Student Mental Health initiative aims to:

- Break down barriers that prevent students from accessing prevention and early intervention mental health services
- Improve collaboration between schools and county service agencies
- Deploy resources for school-based programs focused on positive prevention and early identification
- Disseminate successful school practices statewide to support positive student mental health and academic success
- Equip key personnel at the school, school district, and county office of education levels with knowledge and skills to train school site personnel in prevention strategies and guide schools in developing and implementing successful prevention and early identification programs

### **Education – Prevention – Collaboration**

To create the momentum and sustainability needed to improve student mental health statewide and over the long term, CCSESA's student mental health initiative sets out a framework of four prevention and early intervention goals while providing regional coalitions the flexibility to create programs that are embedded in the fabric of their communities and leverage efforts already underway and other resources being invested.

CCSESA regions define how they will achieve those goals through regional and county-level defined projects after an assessment of local needs and gaps in services. Each region has a specific plan for implementing the four statewide goals:

- Cross-System Collaboration – build relationships among local agencies to develop effective cross-system collaboration
- School Demonstration Programs – build capacity to implement school-based prevention and early identification strategies that promote student mental health
- Education and Training – build capacity to provide education and training for school staff, students and families
- Technical Assistance for Program Implementation – provide technical assistance to schools for program development and implementation

Building on their initial project which focused on kindergarten through grade 8, with enhancement funding CCSESA will expand services to pre-K and high schools, and to alternative education programs for the most at-risk students and their families, along with reaching more



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participants in densely populated areas and more communities in rural and frontier counties.

## Collaboration

CCSESA is working on a regional and county-by-county basis to build strong and sustainable partnerships of organizations that can positively impact student mental health. Examples include: leveraging resources from multiple county-level agencies to provide training on selected programs for prevention and early identification of student mental health issues; sharing information and expertise; establishing a formal county protocol for cross agency collaboration for training, referral, and case follow-up; joining in countywide, cross-agency initiatives; collaborating on local summits around PEI issues; and writing jointly for grant funding to further support local efforts.

### Prevention/Collaboration in Action

A young elementary student saw a knife in another student's backpack on the school bus. Using a new anonymous student online reporting system, the student sent a text message to report the knife to his principal. By the time the bus arrived at school, the principal was waiting to escort the student with the knife off the bus.

The K-12 Regional Student Mental Health Initiative is bringing schools together with law enforcement, community groups, mental health organizations, and others to expand programs such as this one that uses technology to stop bullying and violence. Principals are using the data collected by the technology to improve school climate. Over 75% of the school sites in Tulare County are participating and nearly all schools in Kings County are participating, with more joining daily.

Building upon the local relationships that already exist within counties, CCSESA has either tapped into or created local consortia of public and nonprofit agencies which include serving students in Pre-K through grade 12 within the county as part of their mission. Among the broad range of partners included in these consortia are: county mental and behavioral health agencies, community-based mental health organizations, probation and law enforcement, children's services, foster care, youth services, parents, caregivers, family advocates, and schools.

In recent months, CCSESA's collaboration model has resulted in county office of education staff meeting with local consortia representing 3825 local partners and stakeholder contacts.

In addition, CCSESA has collaborated with 16 of 22 other CalMHSA program partners during the last 6 months on projects such as promoting the Directing Change Video Contest with secondary schools and agency presentations and shared events with NAMI, Didi Hirsch, and Living Works. One county office of education is working with colleges' and universities' Schools of Education to provide online modules for use in credentialing



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programs for teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, and counselors.

### School-Based Demonstration Programs

Two major efforts support the sharing of resources and best practices for prevention and early identification among the Pre K – 12 school community of teachers, parents, school site staff and administrators. First, CCSESA launched a website and an online searchable clearinghouse ([www.regionalk12smhi.org](http://www.regionalk12smhi.org)) that currently indexes over 120 high quality resources/websites, many available in multiple languages. In 3 months, 6000 resource summaries were viewed and new resources are added monthly.

Second, CCSESA identifies demonstration programs that encourage a positive school climate and promote student mental health. Each region has identified evidence-based programs that are being implemented in various schools sites across the region as demonstration sites. So far, CCSESA has reached over 15,000 students and over 1800 adults through demonstration programs and new school sites and programs continue to be added. Demonstration programs include bullying prevention, positive behavioral support and many more. These school-based demonstration programs will be highlighted in the future on the clearinghouse website.

### Training, Education, and Technical Assistance

CCSESA is building an infrastructure of capacity across the state to implement over 30 demonstration programs in as many of its 8000 schools as possible. Over the last 6 months, 139 trainings/events serving 8600 participants were conducted for both students and staff with direct contact with students. An additional 250 trainings and events are scheduled in the coming 6 months.

The goal is to identify, develop or expand a sustainable infrastructure with the region and each county, capable of reaching all schools, and build capacity for education and training to increase the expertise and abilities of teachers, administrators, other school site staff, families/caregivers, students, and community partners, as appropriate, who are in contact with students. Sustainability of programs will be achieved by building internal capacity within schools and communities.

"It's eye opening to see how easily students can access negative or inappropriate websites and chat rooms. It's clear that a strategy to stop bullying must involve educating parents about the kind of sites students are visiting and how to monitor their children going online."

-- *Bulling Prevention Training Participant*

CCSESA also promotes the "Eliminating Barriers to Learning" training provided through the California Department of Education and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) through Living Works. County offices of education are also promoting Mental Health First Aid provided by county mental health and behavioral health partners.