



Mental Health
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Cultivating Positive School Environments: An Evidence-Based, Holistic Approach to Tier 1 Mental Health Education



**MASC/ MASS
2024 Joint Conference**

November 2024





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Embrace a Moment of Mindfulness





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Introductions



**Nancy Cavanaugh MSW
School Committee Chair,
Hopkinton, MA**



**Karen Renaud
M.Ed., NBC-HWC,
CIWPP**



**Abbie Rosenberg
Founder & Executive Director
PMHNP-BC, RN**



Objectives

- ❖ **Define mental health literacy** & explain its significance for all individuals
- ❖ **Gain foundational knowledge** in the 4 components of mental health literacy and **explore strategies** to enhance both personal and student well-being
- ❖ **Explore an evidence-based,** comprehensive and **preventative model** for implementing Tier-1 school mental health literacy programming
- ❖ **Highlight and review actionable takeaways** and **next steps** for each of the evidence-based mental health literacy school-based curricula



The Missing Piece of Mental Health



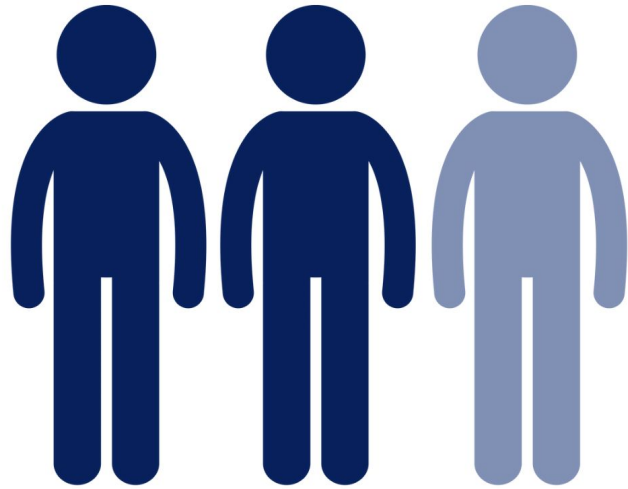
Mental Health Literacy



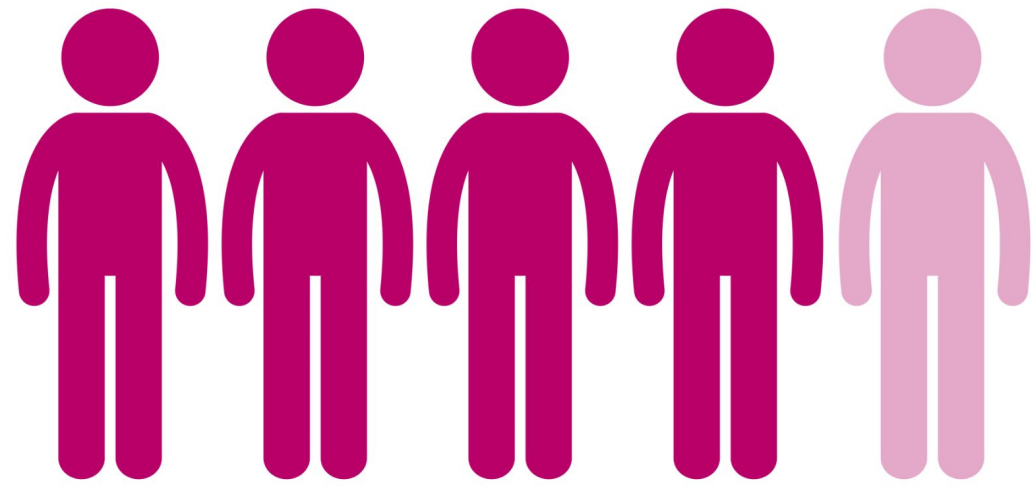
- **decreased stigma***
- **increased mental health knowledge and attitudes***
- **increased help-seeking***
- **increased school connectedness***



Students Want MHL Too!



2 in 3 want schools to teach
about mental health



4 in 5 trust their teachers to
provide mental health info



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MHL Supports Health Equity



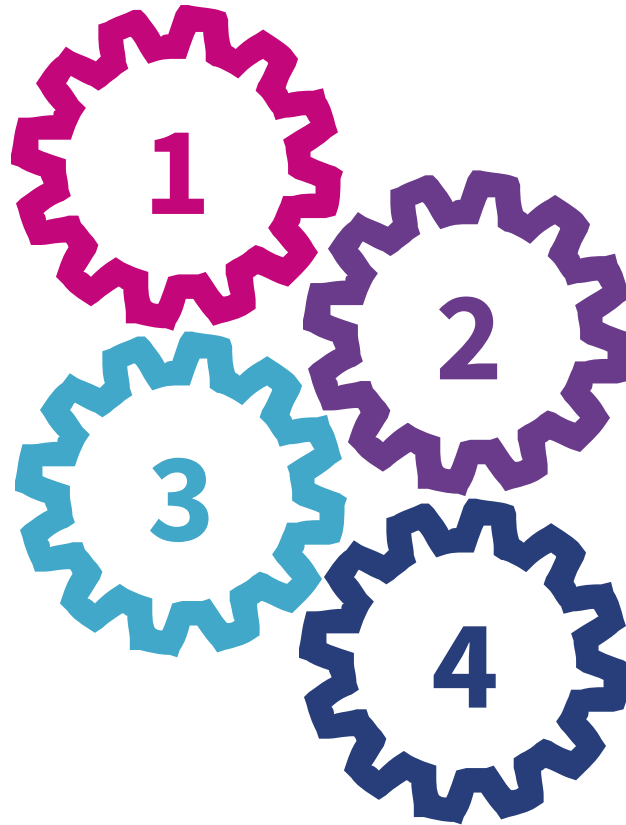
Source: Jorm, A. F. (2012). Mental health literacy: Empowering the community to take action for better mental health. *American Psychologist*, 67(3), 231-243.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025957>; Alves-Bradford, J. M., Trinh, N. H., Bath, E., Coombs, A., & Mangurian, C. (2020). Mental health equity in the twenty-first century: Setting the stage. *Psychiatric Clinics*, 43(3), 415-428.



Mental Health Literacy: The 4 Components

Decrease stigma

**Understand how to
obtain and maintain
good mental health**



**Understand and identify
mental illnesses and
their treatments**

**Enhance help-seeking
efficacy**



Why Do We Need MHL?

75%

of lifetime cases of mental
illness begin by age **25**¹

20%

of the population is
affected by mental illness²

**8-11
years**

is the average delay between
symptom onset and
intervention³

1. NAMI. (n.d.) <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions#:~:text=1%20in%206%20U.S.%20youth.and%2075%25%20by%20age%2024>
2. CDC. (2023). <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20illnesses%20are%20among%20the.live%20with%20a%20mental%20illness.>
3. NAMI. (n.d.) <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>



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Where to Find MHL EBPs





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Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:





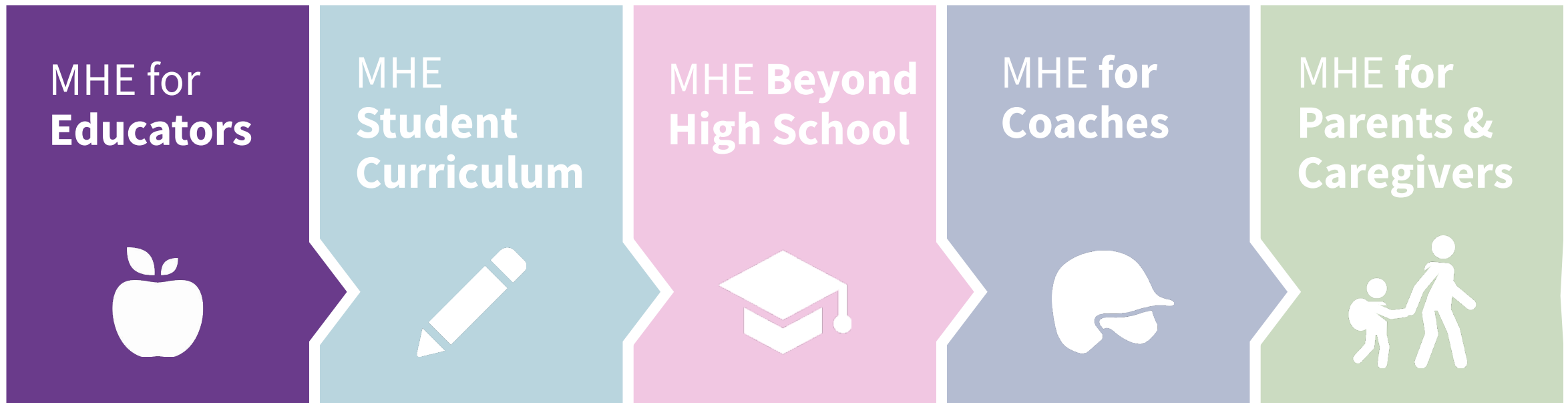
Comprehensive, Tier-1 Mental Health Literacy Programs:

- ❖ **Include all 4 components** of mental health literacy
- ❖ Are **preventative, proactive** approach (rather than crisis-based)
- ❖ Are **evidence-based** (MHC's are adapted from MHL.org)
- ❖ Can be **customized** to the **needs** of specific districts
- ❖ Are **culturally sensitive** and have been **studied across diverse populations**
- ❖ **Developed & delivered** by expert clinicians and educators
- ❖ Can be **virtual or in-person**



Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:

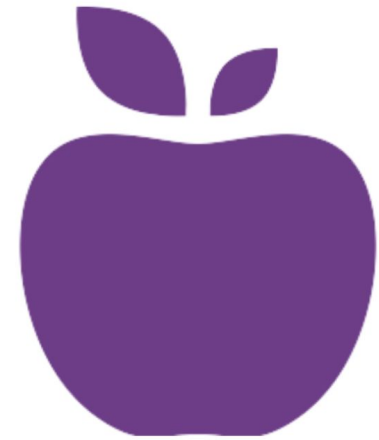




Mental Health Essentials for Educators

Learning Objectives

- how to identify when students need referrals for mental health
- who to refer to within the school
- how to manage mental health in the classroom
- how to talk about mental health
- how to take care of their own mental health





Teaching Strategies to Promote Mental Health



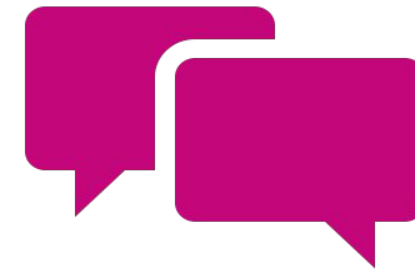
Flexible Grading

Grading policies that allow imperfection (bonus points, 1 dropped score, retakes, etc.)



Sleep-Friendly Deadlines

Moving assignment deadlines to 9:00pm, 5:00pm, or in-class instead of 11:59pm



Casual Check-ins

Take 2 minutes to connect, ask them to rate their mood on a scale of 1-5, or other check-in strategies



Mental Health Essentials for Educators

Testimonials

“A very informative training that will definitely help me become an integral part of my schools community.”

- Anonymous Educator

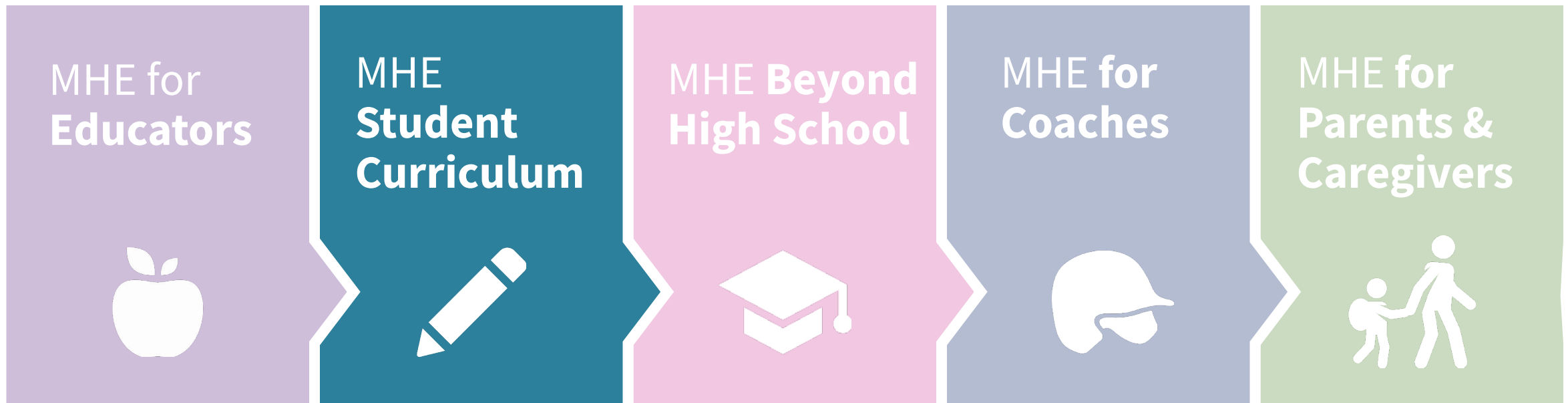
“One of the most relevant and well-presented professional trainings in my 15 years of teaching. I’ve successfully applied this content in my work with students, my relationships with others, and with my own children”

- High School Educator



Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:





Mental Health Essentials Student Curriculum



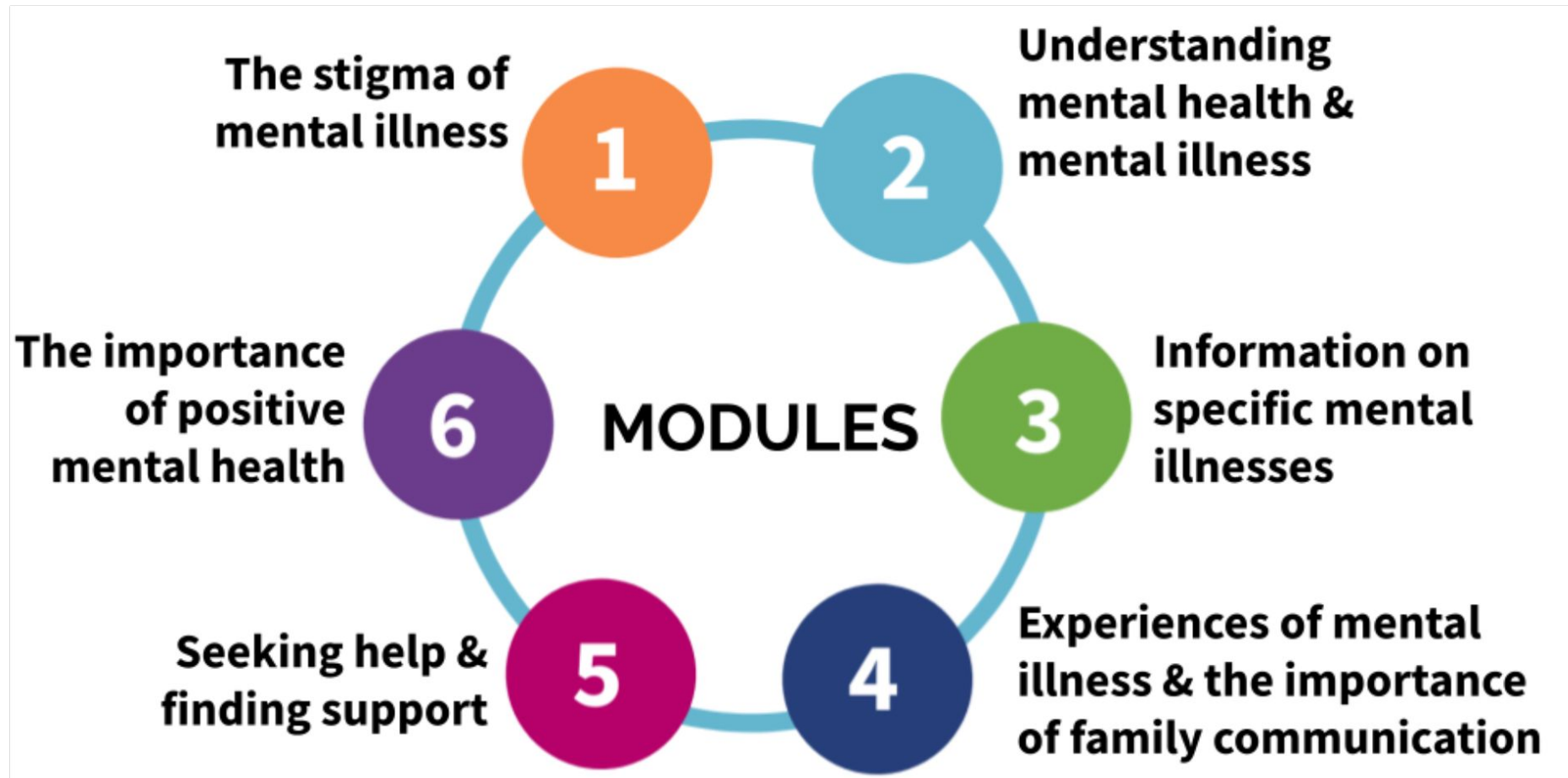
Program Overview

- 4-hour, train-the-trainer program to prepare teachers who will implement the evidence-based mental health literacy curriculum in their classrooms
- Best suited to a single grade, ranging from grades 6-10
- Designed to be taught sequentially in 6-12 hours of class time
- Easily embedded into existing curriculum, flexible, pedagogically familiar
- Efficient, cost-effective, & sustainable
- Aligns with National Health Education Standards & CASEL competencies
- Aligns with Massachusetts Comprehensive Health & Physical Education Framework
- Student facing material translated into Spanish and Portuguese
- Based on 16+ years of evidence





The Student Curriculum: 6 Modules

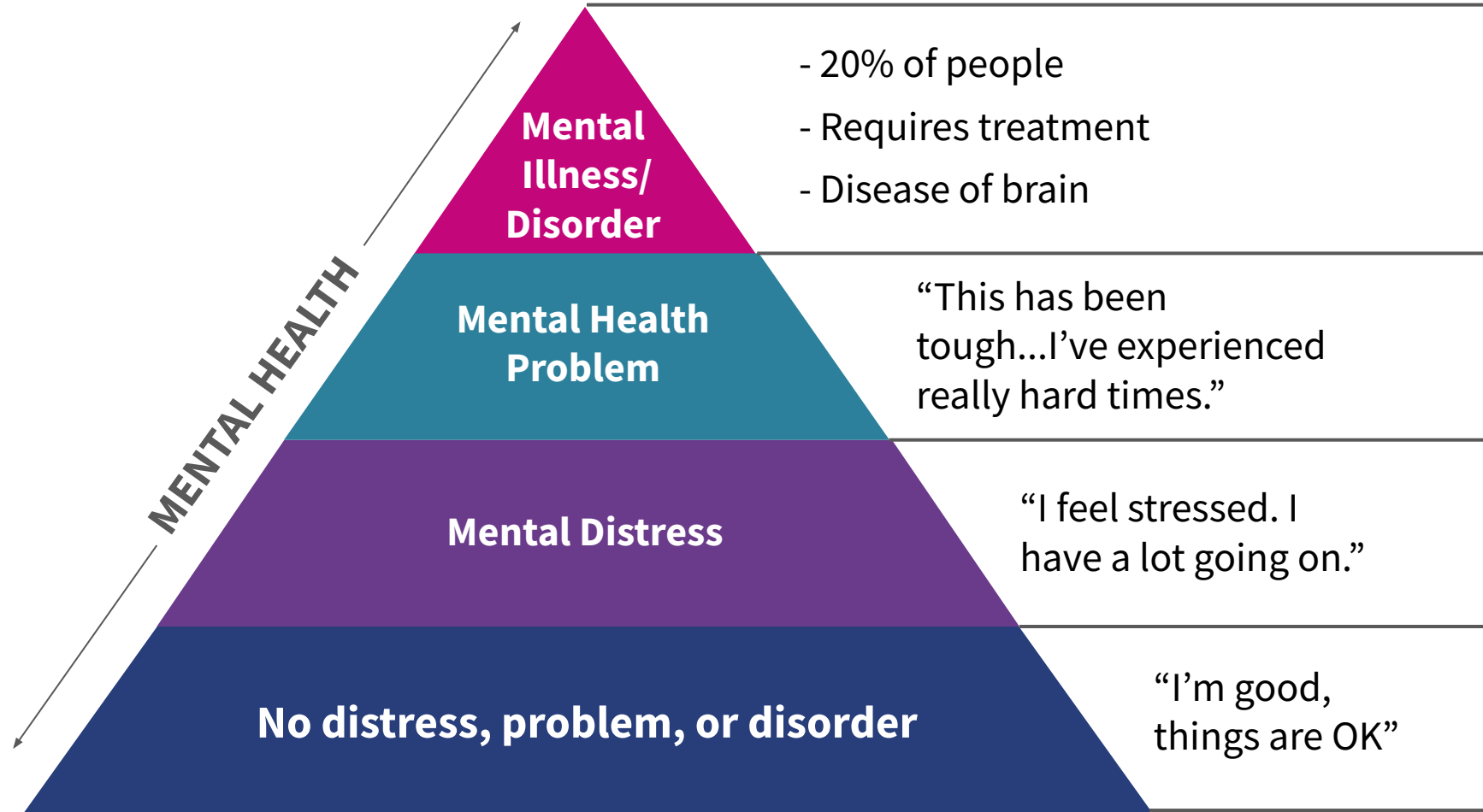




The Mental Health Literacy Pyramid

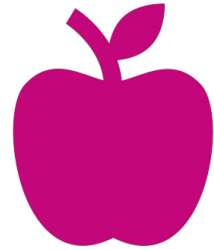
What do these words mean?

The Inter-Relationship of Mental Health States





Essential Mental Health Promotion Strategies



Sufficient sleep, good nutrition,
hydration, & exercise



Prioritizing your own self care:
make time for things you enjoy



Managing social
media use



Helping others, practicing
gratitude, & volunteering
as time permits



Supportive & trusting
relationships



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Program Preview

Personalized Student Toolkit: Positive Mental Health Plan





The Data: Educator & Curriculum

- **Increased knowledge & help-seeking efficacy, decreased stigma** in both educators & students^{1, 2}
- **Earlier identification & referral** for students with mental health problems³
- **Improved** educators' and educators' families' **mental health**⁴
- **More positive** school **culture** as reported by educators⁴
- Curriculum is **effective across every cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic context** in which it's been studied.⁴
- **Increased confidence** in educators' ability to **identify & respond** to student mental health needs⁵
- **Increased comfort** with **talking about mental health** to students, staff, & parents⁶

Sources:

1. Carr, W., Wei, Y., Kutcher, S., & Heffernan, A. (2018). Preparing for the classroom: Mental health knowledge improvement, stigma reduction and enhanced help-seeking efficacy in Canadian preservice teachers. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*.
2. Milin, R., Kutcher, S., Lewis, S. P., Walker, S., Wei, Y., Ferrill, N., & Armstrong, M. A. (2016). Impact of a mental health curriculum on knowledge and stigma among high school students: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 55(5), 383-391.
3. Baxter, A., Wei, Y., Kutcher, S., & Cawthorpe, D. (2022). School-based mental health literacy training shifts the quantity and quality of referrals to tertiary child and adolescent mental health services: A Western Canada regional study. *PLoS ONE* 17(11): e0277695. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277695>
4. Wei, Y. & Kutcher, S. (2018). School Based Mental Health Literacy: Effectively Addressing the Need with Evidence Based Resources. *CAP Journal*.
5. Wei, Y., & Kutcher, S. (2014). Innovations in Practice: 'Go-to' Educator Training on the mental health competencies of educators in the secondary school setting: a program evaluation. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*.
6. Mental Health Literacy. Impact of the Go-To Training Intervention on teachers and counselors: some examples. [Powerpoint Presentation].



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Mental Health Essentials Student Curriculum

Testimonials

“I knew something wasn’t right, but I didn’t have the words for it. This was the best class—with really important information that we all need!”

- 8th Grade Student

“It is such a treasure to have the benefit of your educators, clinicians, staff and knowledge! We appreciate the work you have done with Haverhill Public Schools and this will provide small steps to a bigger outcome to help our community and students!”

- Megan Arivella, HPS Coach of Health & Wellness



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Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:





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Mental Health Essentials Beyond High School

Program Overview

- 4-module program for high school juniors & seniors
- Students will learn
 - how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness
 - when to get professional help
 - how to design a fulfilling life as they move into independence
 - how to use strategies for healthy coping & self-care
- Offered as a train-the-trainer model





How to Make Friends Post-High School

Meet People:
Joining clubs or study
groups and going to
events

**Be Vulnerable &
Take Risks:**
Ask someone to go to a
local event with you

Be Friendly:
Talk to the person
sitting next to you in
class or at work

Be Patient:
Making friends takes
time & it's okay to
keep looking





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Mental Health Essentials Beyond High School

Testimonials

“This program helped me better understand the mental illness and how they can and have impacted me and my friends. I thought the environment was inclusive, and I really enjoyed learning techniques to mitigate my stress.”

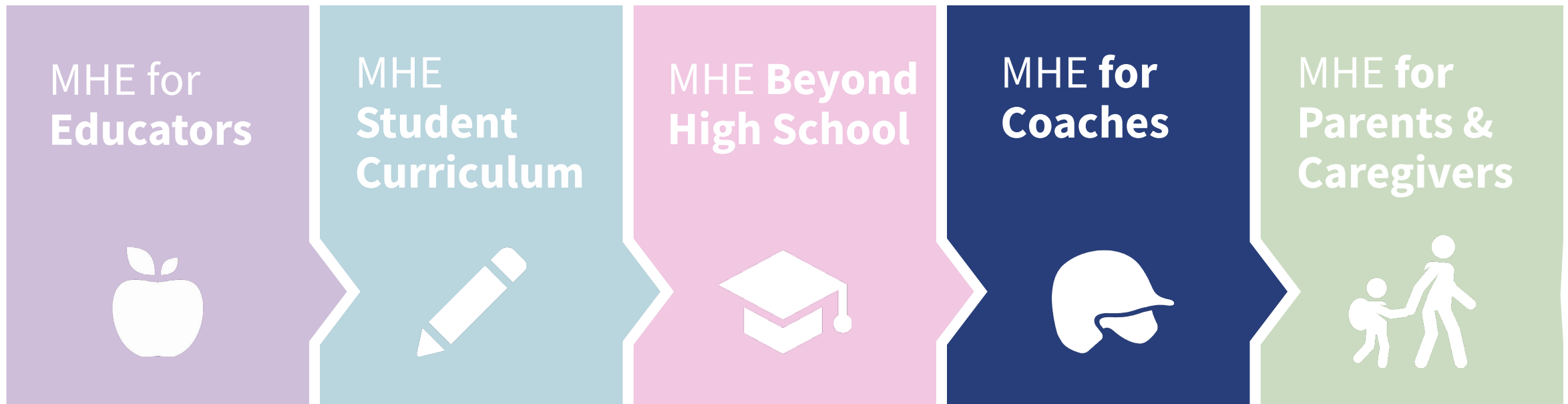
- High School Senior



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Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:





Mental Health Essentials for Coaches

Learning Objectives

- strategies to include mental health as part of the team's culture
- how to identify when athletes need referrals for mental health
- how to manage mental health on the field/court
- how to take care of their own mental health

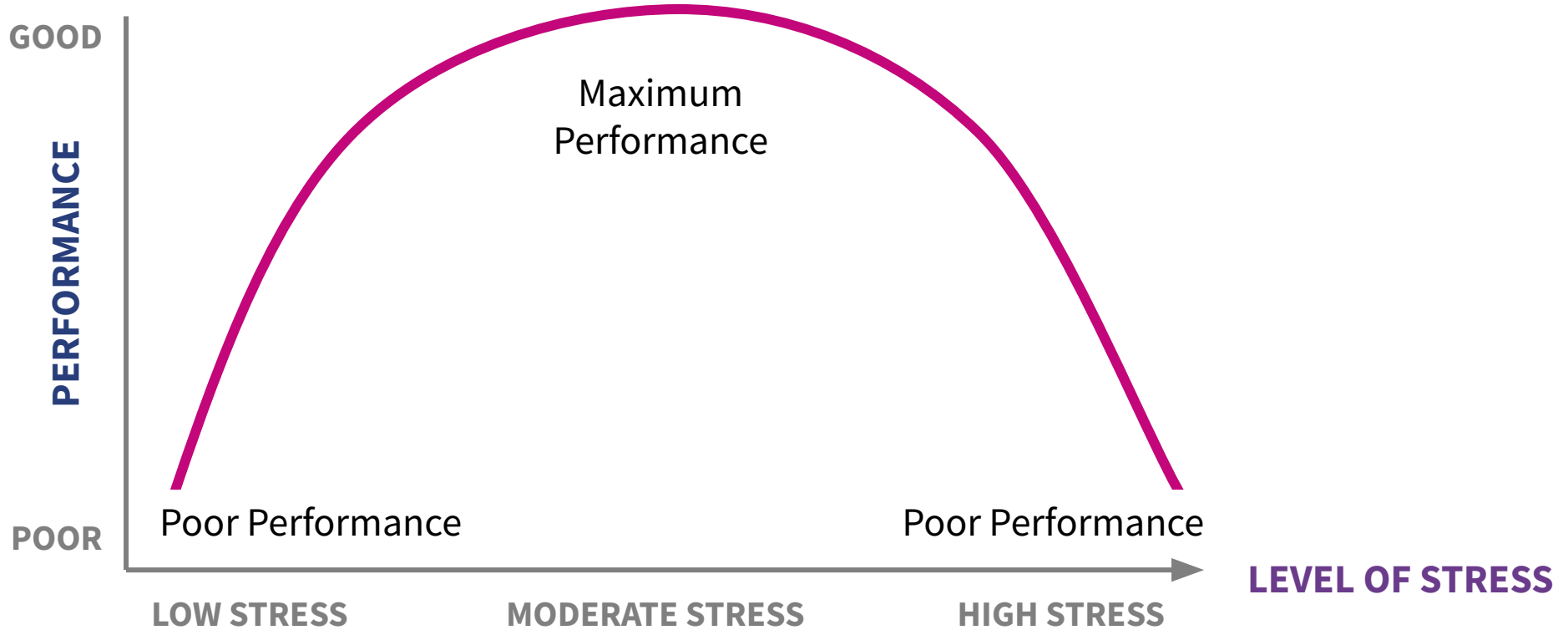




Program Preview

Stress & Performance

Inverted U-Shape Relationship





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Mental Health Essentials for Coaches

Case Study

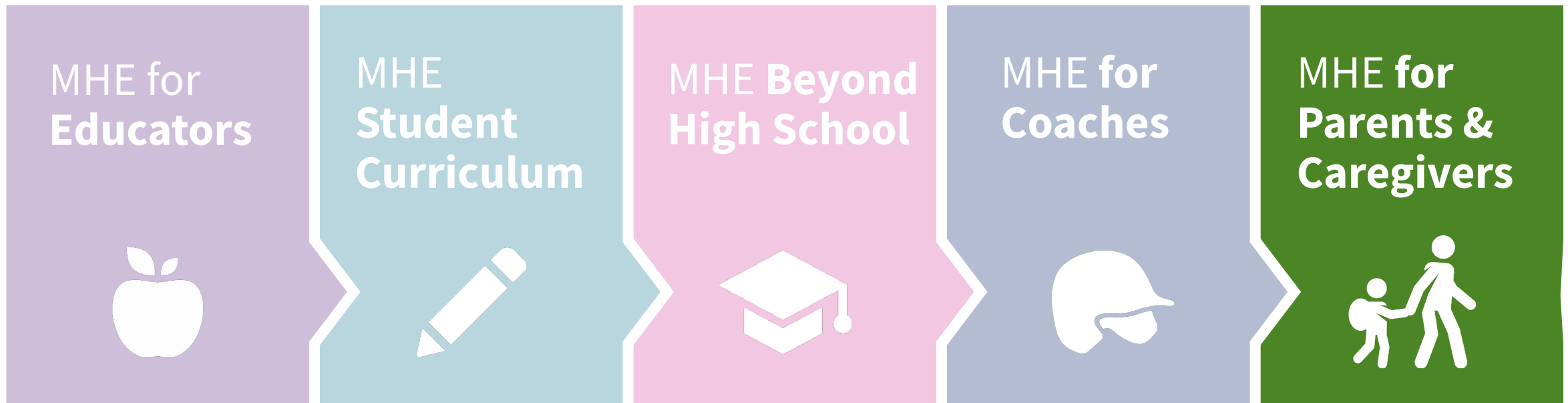




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Overview of the Components of MHC's Comprehensive School-Based Model

Mental Health Essentials (MHE) Programs:





Mental Health Essentials for Parents & Caregivers

Learning Objectives

- strategies to include mental health as part of their parenting
- how to identify when loved ones need support for mental health
- how and where to get professional support
- how to use strategies for self-care for themselves and their loved ones





Having Conversations About Mental Health

Share your observations

“I notice...”

Ask non-judgmental questions to gather info

**“Tell me more...”
“I wonder if....”**

Validate their feelings & encourage vulnerability

“It sounds like you’re feeling...Thank you for sharing that with me”

Plant a seed of hope

“There are things we can do to help you”

Ask how to help & create an action plan

“What can I do to support you? Our next step...”



Have the Conversation

Will asking someone
about suicidal
thoughts and/or
plans plant the seed?

Asking someone if they have
thoughts or plans of suicide
will **NOT** plant the seed...

In fact, it will give them the
opportunity to talk and get help!



Mental Health Essentials for Parents & Caregivers

Testimonials

“The speakers gave great resources to help parents...it was well-worth the time.”

- Parent of a Teen

“Critical training for today’s parents! This program provided me a clear framework for recognizing mental illness and knowing when to take action. As a result, I feel more confident navigating these conversations with my teens.”

- Parent of a 9th Grader



Mental Health Literacy Action Steps:



Decrease Stigma

- Host a school-wide Mental Health Awareness event with
 - workshops
 - guest speakers
 - and activities
- Focus on
 - understanding mental illness
 - debunking common myths
 - and promoting respectful language



Mental Health Literacy Action Steps:



Understand & Identify Mental Illnesses

- Conduct professional development sessions for staff to help them
 - recognize signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions in students
 - and have an overview of how to get students and families connected to help



Mental Health Literacy Action Steps:



Understand How to Obtain and Maintain Good Mental Health:

- Offer a variety of
 - education
 - resources
 - and services that focus on
 - reducing stress
 - and supporting mental wellness



Mental Health Literacy Action Steps:



Enhance Help-Seeking:

- Publicize clear, accessible information on
 - where and how students and families can seek help for mental health concerns
 - including contact details for school counselors and local crisis resources



Next steps: Implementing Comprehensive, Tier-1 MHL

1. **Chad's Legacy Project:** <https://www.mentalhealthinstruction.org/>
2. National Center for School Mental Health, **School Mental Health Quality Guide:** Mental Health Promotion Services and Supports (Tier 1):
<https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/media/som/microsites/ncsmh/documents/quality-guides/Tier-1.pdf>
3. **Mental Health Collaborative:** www.mentalhealthcollaborative.org



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Anonymous Evaluation



<https://forms.gle/aokhariPYQvrgxr1A>

Questions?

Contact us by email:
info@mentalhealthcollaborative.org

Follow us on our website and on social media for further information and resources:

www.mentalhealthcollaborative.org



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