OHIO'S COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY FRAMEWORK

A Guide to Support Local Implementation
February 2023

Developed collaboratively by the Ohio School Safety Center within the Department of Public Safety, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Ohio Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Collectively, the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) within the Department of Public Safety (ODPS), Ohio Department of Education (ODE), and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) have collaborated to develop a statewide comprehensive approach to school safety. Each agency respectively has an inherent interest and role in school safety in Ohio.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

OSSC is housed within ODPS and is responsible for assisting local schools and law enforcement with preventing, preparing for, and responding to threats and acts of violence, including self-harm, through a holistic, solutions-based method for improving school safety. Using a cross-disciplinary approach, OSSC provides resources to schools to enhance their strategies for comprehensive safety. Their goal is total commitment in supporting all schools in ensuring the safety of students, employees, and visitors through effective policies and procedures, training, and community and interagency involvement. OSSC is tasked with hosting an annual school safety summit for K-12 schools and operating the state school safety website (ohioschoolsafetycenter.ohio.gov) to provide links to safety resources for both K-12 and higher education.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Office of Whole Child Supports at ODE leads the Department's strategies on meeting the needs of the whole child, which includes, physical health; mental and behavioral health; prevention education; positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS); social-emotional learning; and school climate, attendance, family, and community engagement. The office also administers programs that support vulnerable youth populations, including students experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, English learners, and justice-involved youth.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

The OhioMHAS Office of Prevention Services is dedicated to building a workforce that is capable of sustaining community-based prevention strategies and growing the use of evidence-based practices rooted in the science of prevention. The Office promotes healthy, safe and resilient communities by establishing a strong infrastructure and support that has the capacity to sustain the future of effective prevention in Ohio. OhioMHAS is creating Centers of Excellence for Prevention to support schools and communities. These Centers provide technical assistance and support for integrating school safety program elements within school wellness initiatives, comprehensive suicide prevention programs, and early intervention strategies. A comprehensive

interdisciplinary, collaborative, and cohesive approach is required to create and sustain genuinely safe, supportive schools that meet the needs of the whole child. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors and must be designed and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach. Integrating mental health and safety programming and services into the overall multitiered system of supports and the PBIS framework is essential for successful and sustainable improvements in school safety and academic achievement.

DEVELOPMENT

A partnership between the Ohio Departments of Education (ODE), Public Safety (ODPS), and Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) was created to develop an efficient, effective, and comprehensive approach for school safety based on best practices and evidence-informed strategies.

These agencies collaborated through the U.S. Department of Education-funded Center to Improve Social Emotional Learning and School Safety (CISELSS) to closely coordinate their safety and well-being efforts across the state. As a part of this process, the Ohio Agencies identified a vision for their work and defined school safety using components from Ohio's Whole Child Framework.

VISION

Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults. A safe school addresses the emotional and physical safety of students and staff by using a comprehensive approach that engages school staff, students, families, and the community.

- The school establishes emotional safety by creating a climate that is inclusive, supportive, and builds positive relationships among students and staff. The school implements strategies to prevent emotional harm and build resiliency including teaching students social and emotional skills, supporting students' behavioral health needs, addressing bullying, and reducing risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. The school uses threat assessments to determine severity of threats and to resolve conflicts or problems early.

- The school's physical environment plays a critical role in keeping students safe. The school ensures the physical safety of its students, staff, and visitors through strategic facility design, maintenance, effective security policies and procedures, and thorough emergency planning and preparedness efforts. A healthy and safe physical school environment promotes learning by ensuring the health and safety of students and staff.

THE FOUNDATION OF THIS REPORT

The team created an inventory of existing initiatives and categorized them into broad domains of safety. As a result of this work, the team identified the need for a model describing best practices and components necessary for creating a comprehensive approach to school safety. After reviewing available national frameworks for school safety, the team selected one to use as a foundation for creating an Ohio version.

The *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*, developed jointly by the American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists, School of Social Work Association of America, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, draws on research and evidence-based practices to frame a comprehensive approach to safety in schools. Specifically, Ohio adopted best practices from this existing framework, modified them to best suit Ohio's needs, and aligned specific programs and initiatives in Ohio to these practices.

The following outlines a set of state-level systems and frameworks that underpin the goals and objectives of this comprehensive approach to school safety:

Whole Child Framework:

Ohio's strategic plan for education, Each Child, Our Future, puts the whole child at the center, where each component of the plan works harmoniously to support a whole-child approach. Likewise, Ohio's Whole Child Framework also places the whole child at the center, with district, school, family, and community supporting the needs of the whole child. using a comprehensive approach. A whole child approach broadens district and school focus beyond academics to include meeting students social-emotional, physical, and safety needs. The Whole Child Framework provides a blueprint to meet these

whole child needs, which are foundational to a child's intellectual and social development and necessary for students to fully engage in learning and school. Information and resources on this framework can be found here.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is a proactive multi-tiered framework for selecting and using prevention and intervention strategies to support students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence. More information can be found here.

Trauma Informed Schools:

A trauma-informed school is one in which all students and staff feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where the impact of trauma on teaching and learning is addressed at the center of the educational mission. More information can be found here.

Social and Emotional Learning Standards:

Social-emotional learning (SEL) includes competencies like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, collaboration, empathy, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. The elements of social-emotional learning give children the tools to become resilient and persistent in life. More information and resources to support SEL can be found here.

Prevent, Protect & Mitigate, and Respond & Recover:

To support emergency preparedness, the state aligns its school safety planning to the five mission areas of emergency preparedness. These mission areas provide the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to our schools. More information can be found at Ohio's School Safety Center website here.

The Ohio School Wellness Initiative:

This initiative was designed to explore, implement, and sustain a full continuum of care including prevention, early intervention, and treatment practices for K-12 students within local districts. A key component of this initiative is the development of a model Student Assistance Program and a Staff Wellness Framework that can serve as a best practice standard for Ohio's K-12 schools. More information and resources can be found here.

Threat Assessment:

According to the National Threat Assessment Center at the United States Secret Service, "The goal of a Threat Assessment Team is to identify students of concern, assess their risk for engaging in violence or other harmful

activities, and identify intervention strategies to manage that risk." (USSS, NTAC, "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence" (2018), pp 5.) Ohio's 133rd General Assembly enacted House Bill 123, the "Safety and Violence Education Students (SAVE Students) Act," regarding school security and youth suicide awareness education and training. HB 123 requires each local, city, exempted village, and joint vocational school district to create a threat assessment team for each school building in the district serving grades six through 12. Each team shall be multidisciplinary, when possible, and may include school administrators, mental health professionals, school resource officers, and other necessary personnel. More information on the threat assessment requirements can be found on the OSSC website.

Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention Program:

This program describes a set of school-based strategies aimed at preventing and addressing adolescent suicide on multiple levels. Comprehensive school suicide prevention is important because efforts can be made within the school to protect adolescents from suicide as well as to quickly detect warning signs and risk factors in adolescents who are suicidal. This ensures that adolescents at risk receive the help they need. Effective comprehensive school suicide prevention programs consist of three levels: Primary Prevention (prevention), Secondary Prevention (intervention), and Tertiary Prevention (postvention). All three levels are needed for schools to comprehensively address adolescent suicide. More information and resources can be found here.

PARTNERS

The foundation of the comprehensive school safety approach is true and meaningful collaboration between ODE, ODPS, and OhioMHAS. As leaders of whole child, mental health, and school safety work, these agencies aim to closely coordinate their respective efforts to be more effective and efficient in serving local schools and districts.

PRINCIPLES

The principles of the approach serve as the foundational elements of comprehensive school safety efforts in Ohio. Though not all these principles are applicable to every initiative, each initiative will embody one or more of these principles to ensure the needs of every student are being met. These state-level principles can encourage alignment and coherence of school safety initiatives across the state.

SCHOOL SAFETY EFFORTS IN OHIO WILL BE...

- Equitable, culturally, and linguistically competent;
- Age and developmentally appropriate;
- Evidence-based;
- Trauma Informed;
- Youth guided and family driven;
- Aligned with the whole child approach;
- Collaborative between disciplines, agencies, and partners;
- Multitiered systems of support;
- Balanced physical, social, and emotional safety efforts;
- Tailored to locality; and
- Sustainable.

GOALS

The goals are what Ohio hopes to achieve through this comprehensive approach to school safety. These goals span both spectrums of physical and emotional safety and the ***Prevent, Protect & Mitigate, and Respond & Recover*** categories.

Through a partnership between agencies, Ohio will have a comprehensive approach to school safety that will...

- Promote social and emotional learning and development;
- Promote mental, emotional, and behavioral health;
- Connect family, schools, and communities;
- Prevent behavioral health issues and substance abuse;
- Serve vulnerable and at-risk populations;
- Promote positive school climate;
- Create safe and violence-free schools;
- Promote academic and career success; and
- Employ effective and positive school discipline.

ACTIVITIES

The activities detail the specific actions the state agencies will undertake to support the goals of this approach ultimately delivered at the district and school levels.

STATE PARTNERS WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT THROUGH...

- Needs assessment;
- Professional development;
- Capacity building;
- Policy changes and development;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Resource development and deployment;
- Technical assistance; and
- Coordination and integration across agencies.

INITIATIVES

The initiatives are the current portfolio of state-level school safety programs and resources that span both spectrums of physical and emotional safety and the Prevent, Protect & Mitigate, and Respond & Recover categories.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes are the short, intermediate, and long-term results of the comprehensive school safety model framework that will more holistically support every child across Ohio.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

• Specific stakeholders have an increased understanding of the comprehensive approach

• Coordinated approach for school safety is reinforced across systems

• Resources are gathered and shared with schools and across systems for prevention, intervention, and responses to student safety needs

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

• Documents and resources reflect the shared vision

• State system of support offering professional development and technical assistance for implementing and maintaining comprehensive approach

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

State Level

• Policies will align among agencies – we will have a shared vision and goal

• State agency resources are coordinated to better assist school safety needs

Local Level

• Schools, families, and communities will adopt the shared vision of comprehensive school safety

• Schools support the shared framework and understand the strategies to help students succeed

• Schools prioritize resources to implement approach to school safety

School safety and positive school climate are not achieved by singular actions like purchasing a designated program or piece of equipment, but rather by effective comprehensive and collaborative efforts requiring the dedication and commitment of all school staff and relevant community members. Schools require consistent and effective approaches to prevent violence and promote learning, sufficient time to implement these approaches, and ongoing evaluation.

The following outlines the best practices that can be implemented locally, and that fit within, and support, Ohio's Comprehensive School Safety Framework.

1. **Fully integrate learning supports (e.g., behavioral, mental health, and social services), instruction, and school management within a comprehensive, cohesive approach that facilitates multidisciplinary collaboration (e.g. Student Assistance Program).**

Safe and successful learning environments are fostered through collaboration among school staff and community partners, while also integrating existing initiatives in the school that address the mental and behavioral health of staff, students and families. Effective schools and learning environments provide equivalent resources to support instructional components (e.g., teacher quality, high academic standards, curriculum), organizational/management components (e.g., shared governance, accountability, budget decisions), and learning supports (e.g., mental health services; see Figure 1).

Rather than viewing school safety as a targeted outcome for a single, stand-alone program or plan developed by the school building principal alone, this model integrates all services for students, staff, and families by framing the necessary behavioral, mental health, and social services within the context of school culture and learning. Integrated services lead to more sustainable and comprehensive school improvement, reduce duplicative efforts and redundancy, and require leadership by the principal and a commitment from the entire staff.

Figure 1 - Comprehensive, Integrated School Improvement Model
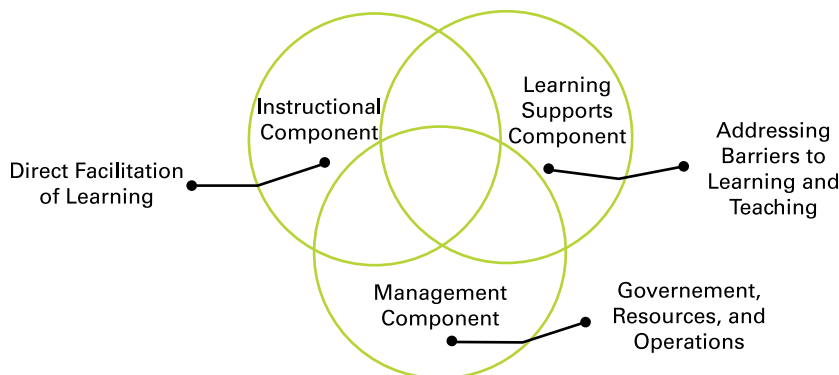
Note: Adapted from UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools and the National Association of School Psychologists. (2010). Moving from a Two- to a Three-Component Approach [Advocacy statement]. Adopted with permission.

2. Implement multitiered systems of support (MTSS) that encompass prevention, wellness promotion, and interventions that increase with intensity based on student need, and that promote close school–community collaboration.

The most effective way to implement integrated services that support school safety and student learning is through a school-wide multitiered system of supports (MTSS). MTSS encompasses (a) prevention and wellness promotion; (b) universal screening for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning; (c) implementation of evidence-based interventions that increase in intensity as needed; (d) monitoring of ongoing student progress in response to implemented interventions; and (e) engagement in systematic data-based decision making about services needed for students based on specific outcomes.

In a growing number of schools in Ohio and across the country, response to intervention (RTI) and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) constitute the primary methods for implementing an MTSS framework. Ideally though, MTSS is implemented more holistically to integrate efforts targeting academic, behavioral, social, emotional, physical, and mental health concerns. This framework is more effective with coordination of school-employed and community-based service providers to ensure integration and coordination of services among the school, home, and community.
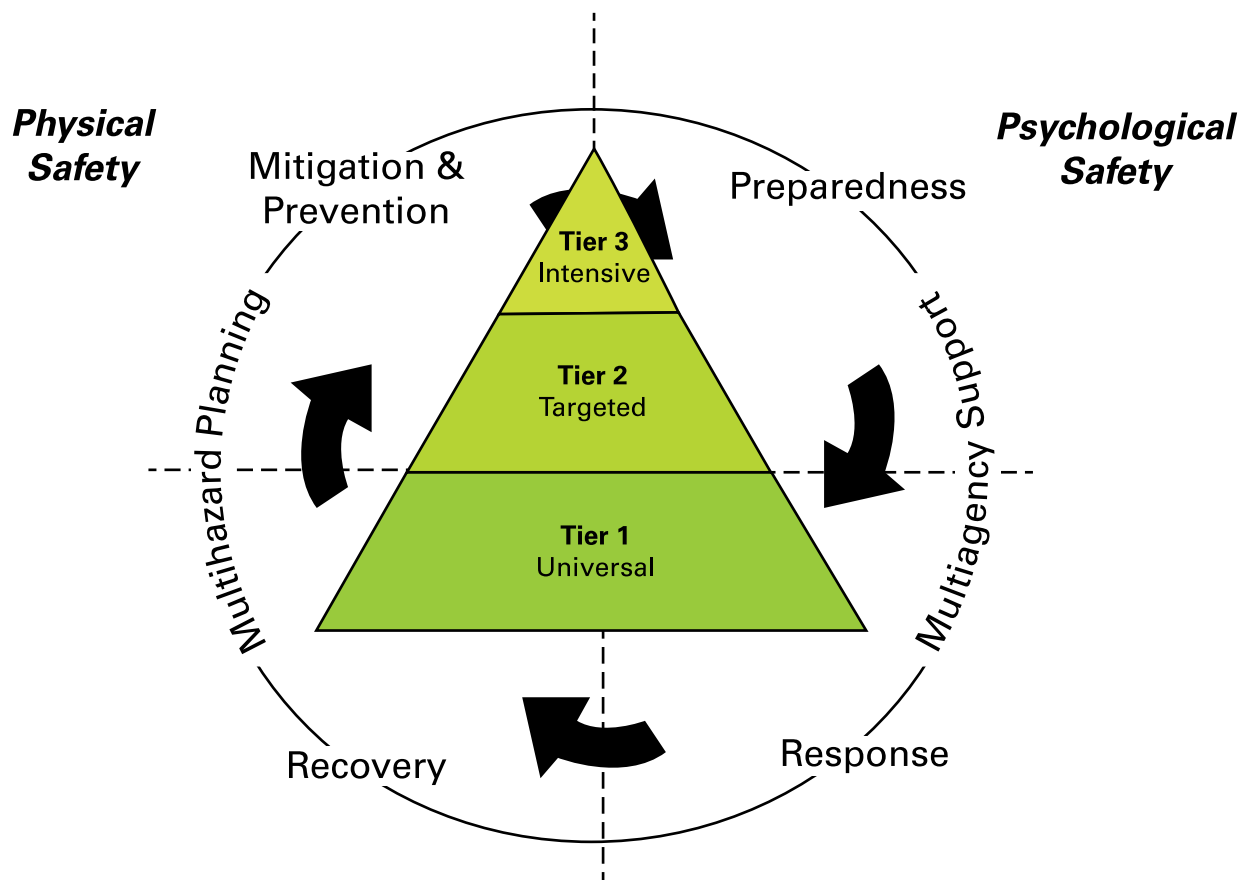
Effective MTSS requires:

- Adequate access to school-employed specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses) and community-based services;

- Collaboration and integration of services, including integration of mental health, behavioral, social emotional learning and academic supports, as well integration of school-based and community services;

- Adequate staff time for planning and problem solving;

- Effective collection, evaluation, interpretation, and use of data; and

- Patience, commitment, and strong leadership.

One approach to integrating school safety and crisis management into an MTSS framework is the M-PHAT model (see Figure 2). This approach can be aligned to existing schools' PBIS Framework.

M-PHAT stands for:

- Multi-Phase (prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery)

- Multi-Hazard (accidental death, school violence, natural disasters, terrorism)

- Multi-Agency (school, police, fire, EMS, mental health)

- Multi-Tiered (an MTSS framework)

Figure 2 - Comprehensive Safe Learning Environment: The M-PHAT Approach

Physical Safety

Mitigation & Prevention

Preparedness

Psychological Safety

Multihazard Planning

Multiagency Support

Tier 3
Intensive

Tier 2
Targeted

Tier 1
Universal

Recovery

Response

Note: From *Comprehensive Planning for Safe Learning Environments: School Professional's Guide to Integrating Physical and Psychological Safety - Prevention Through Recovery* by M.A. Reeves, L.M. Kanan, Amy E. Plog. 2010. New York, NY: Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

3. **Improve access to school-based mental health supports by ensuring adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals who are trained to infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and to help integrate services provided through school–community partnerships into existing school initiatives (e.g. Student Assistance Program, MTSS, PBIS).**

Mental health is developed early in life and educators play a significant role in ensuring that students' experiences throughout their school careers contribute to their positive mental health. Access to school-based mental health services and supports directly improves students' physical and psychological safety, academic performance, and social–emotional learning.

This requires adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals (school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and in some cases, school nurses) to ensure that services are high quality, effective, and appropriate to the school context. Access to school mental health services cannot be sporadic or disconnected from the learning process. Just as children are not simply small adults, schools are not simply community clinics with blackboards.

Having prevention and mental health professionals as integrated members of the school staff empowers principals to more efficiently and effectively deploy resources, ensure coordination of services, evaluate their effectiveness, and adjust supports to meet the dynamic needs of their student populations. Improving access also allows for enhanced collaboration with community providers to meet the more intense or clinical needs of students (see Figure 3).

The Ohio School Wellness Initiative includes a coordinator role to implement its described best practices. Those serving in this role are trained in the interconnectivity among school policy, school system functioning, learning, mental health, and family systems. This coordinator role supports school employed prevention and community mental health professionals to ensure that all these services are properly and effectively infused into the learning environment. When this occurs, instructional leaders and teachers' abilities to provide a safe school setting improves along with the optimum conditions for teaching and learning.

The School Wellness Coordinator role can be used to support the team interaction of principals, school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers with their unique individual skills that complement one another in such a way that the sum is greater than the parts. When given the opportunity to work collectively, they are ready and capable of providing an even wider range of services, such as:

• Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting school-level data to improve availability and effectiveness of mental services;

• Designing and implementing multi-tiered interventions, such as PBIS, to meet the behavioral and mental health needs of students;

• Promoting prevention, social emotional learning, and early intervention services;

• Providing individual and group counseling;

• Providing staff development related to positive discipline, behavior, and mental health (including mental health first aid);

• Providing risk and threat assessments;

• Supporting teachers through consultation and collaboration; and

• Coordinating with community service providers and integrating intensive interventions into the schooling process.

Figure 3 - The Continium of School Mental Health Services
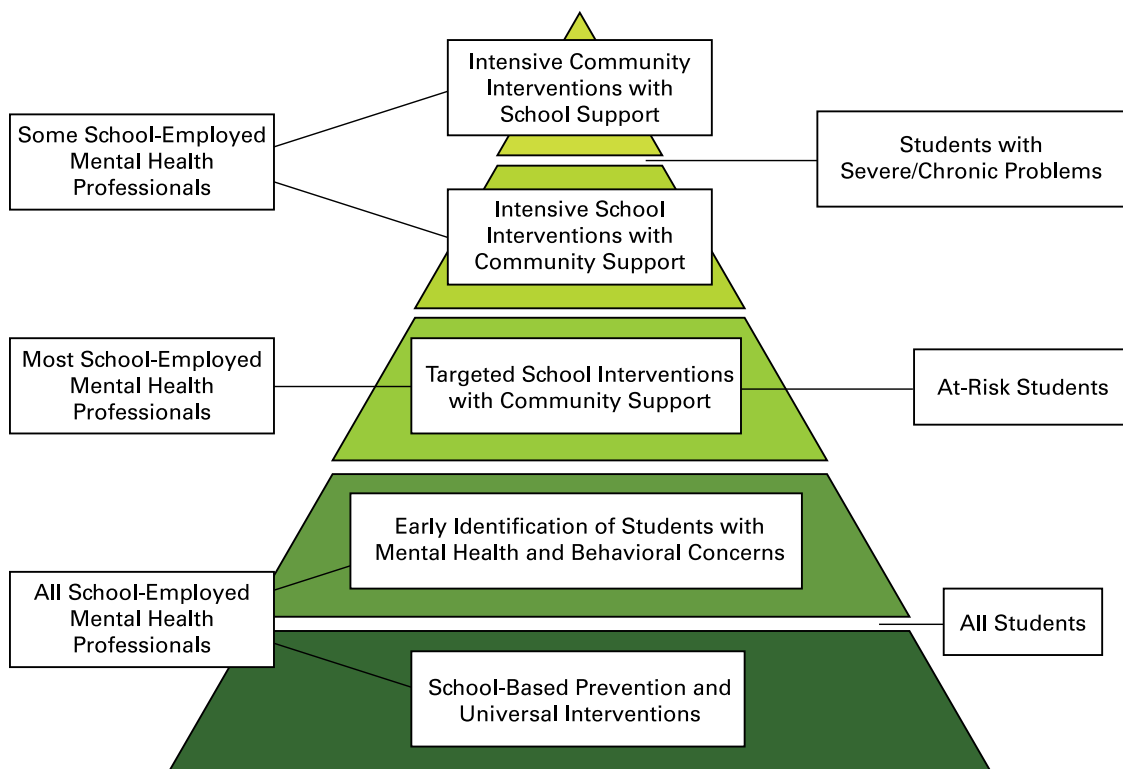
Note: Figure 3 adapted from "Communication Planning and Message Development: Promoting School-Based Mental Health Services," by the National Association of School Psychologists, 2006, Communique, 35(1), p. 27. Copyright by the National Association of School Psychologists. Adapted with permission.

A Note on Staffing: Providing effective, integrated, and comprehensive services requires schools to maintain appropriate staffing levels for their school employed mental health and prevention professionals. Appropriate staff levels support the ability of these professionals to devote time to important initiatives, including school-wide prevention services (e.g., bullying, violence, and dropout prevention), safety promotion, and sustained school improvement through the PBIS framework. Many districts go without prevention and early intervention services that effectively link mental health, school climate, school safety, and academic instruction.

Partnerships with community providers or school-based health centers can provide important resources for individual students. However, community providers sometimes lack familiarity with specific processes in teaching and learning and with systemic aspects of schooling.

Ohio districts and schools receive [Student Wellness and Success, Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid and Base Cost funds](#) to provide mental health supports including funds to support hiring additional mental health staff.

Successful school–community partnerships, such as the Ohio School Wellness Initiative Student Assistance Program, integrate community supports into existing school initiatives utilizing a collaborative approach between school and community providers that enhances effectiveness and sustainability. In order to familiarize community partners with the programs, practices, and administrative aspects of the school system, professional development and/or training is available to community providers who work closely with the school district through regional technical assistance teams.

District-wide policies must support principals and school safety teams to provide services in school-based settings and strengthen the ability of schools to respond to student and family needs directly. While working to improve ratios, districts can begin to move toward more effective and sustainable services by making administrative aspects of the school system, professional development and/or training available to community providers who work closely with the school district through regional technical assistance teams.

District-wide policies must support principals and school safety teams to provide services in school-based settings and strengthen the ability of schools to respond to student and family needs directly. While working to improve ratios, districts can begin to move toward more effective and sustainable services by:

- Identifying a school wellness program coordinator to be trained in the Ohio School Wellness Initiative model;

- Assigning a school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker to coordinate school-based services with those provided by community providers;

- Ensuring that the school data being collected and resulting strategies are addressing the most urgent areas of need regarding safety and climate and are included in school improvement plans;

- Providing training that targets the specific needs of individual schools, their staffs, and their students; and

- Reviewing current use of mental health staff and identifying critical shifts in their responsibilities to bolster prevention efforts.

4. **Integrate ongoing positive school climate and safety efforts with crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery to ensure that crisis training and plans: (a) are relevant to the school context, (b) reinforce learning, (c) make maximum use of existing staff resources, (d) facilitate effective threat assessment, and (e) are consistently reviewed and practiced.**

Schools need support for developing an integrated PBIS, threat assessment and emergency management process that focuses on overall school climate as well as crisis and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery (see Figure 4). School safety and crisis response occur on a continuum, and crisis planning, response, and recovery should build upon ongoing school safety and mental health services. School crisis and emergency preparedness training should encompass prevention/mitigation, early intervention (which is part of ongoing school safety), immediate response/intervention, and long-term recovery. These four phases are clearly articulated by the federal Departments of Education and Homeland Security.

Training and planning need to be relevant to the learning context and make maximum use of existing staff resources and teaming structures. Those responsible for safety and crisis planning include principals, school mental health professionals, school security personnel, appropriate community stakeholders (such as representatives from local law enforcement and

emergency personnel), and other school staff or district liaisons to help sustain efforts over time. Additionally, crisis and emergency preparedness plans need to be consistently reviewed and practiced, which is more easily facilitated by an actively engaged team that links the school to the broader community. Active engagement of the team is often directly linked to suggested staffing levels that allow time for collaboration and planning. Effective, engaged teams and plans:

• Contribute to ongoing school safety and improved school climate by supporting a school-wide, evidence-based approach that is appropriate to the unique school culture and context;

• Balance efforts to promote and protect physical and psychological safety;

• Minimize unsafe behaviors such as bullying, fighting, and risk-taking by providing quality prevention programming that is integrated within the PBIS framework;

• Improve early identification and support for students at risk of harming themselves or others (e.g., threat assessment);

• Model collaborative problem solving;

• Provide for consistent, ongoing training of all school staff;

• Address the range of crises that schools can face with a focus on what is most likely to occur (e.g., suicide or death of a student or staff member, school violence, natural disaster);

• Improve response to crises when the unpreventable occurs;

• Ensure an organized plan that has appropriately assessed risks to the school and the learning environment and has been adopted by the school safety leadership to promote a return to normalcy following a crisis or emergency; and

• Promote efforts for ongoing learning and long-term emotional recovery for every student and family.
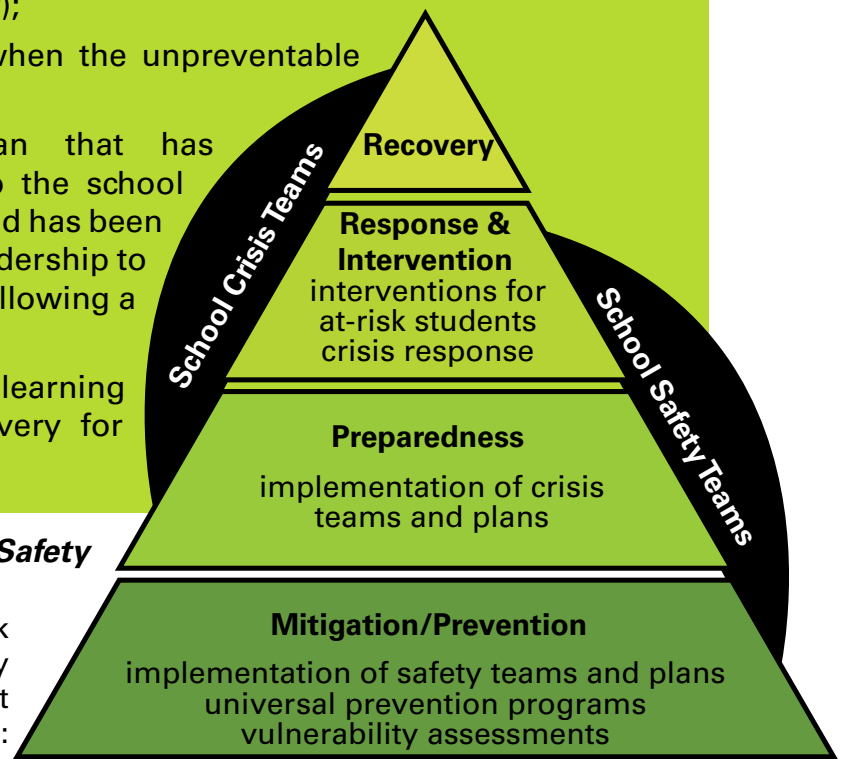
Figure 4 - Physical and Psychological Safety

Note: Adapted from Cherry Creek School District. (2008) Emergency response and crisis management guide. Greenwood Village, CO: Author. Adapted with permission.

School Crisis Teams

School Safety Teams

Recovery

Response & Intervention
interventions for at-risk students
crisis response

Preparedness
implementation of crisis teams and plans

Mitigation/Prevention
implementation of safety teams and plans
universal prevention programs
vulnerability assessments

5. Balance physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures that can undermine the learning environment. By combining reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked doors and monitored public spaces) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships, and encourage students and adults to report potential threats.

Any effort to address school safety should balance building security/physical safety with psychological safety. Relying on highly restrictive physical safety measures alone typically does not objectively improve school safety. In contrast, combining reasonable physical security measures with efforts to enhance school climate more fully promotes overall school safety. Effectively balancing physical and psychological safety entails:

• Assessing the physical security features of the campus through security and vulnerability assessments with local first responders, such as access points to school grounds, parking lots and buildings, and lighting and adult supervision in lobbies, hallways, parking lots, and open spaces;

• Employing environmental design techniques, such as ensuring that playgrounds and sports fields are surrounded by fences or other natural barriers, to limit visual and physical access by non-school personnel;

• Evaluating policies and practices to ensure that students are well monitored, school guests are appropriately identified and escorted, and potential risks and threats are addressed quickly;

• Building trusting, respectful relationships among students, staff, and families; and

• Providing access to school mental health services and educating students and staff on how and when to seek help.

Schools also should carefully weigh the unique needs of their communities when determining the need to hire additional security personnel or school resource officers (SROs). It is important to recognize that SROs differ from other school security personnel. SROs are commissioned law enforcement officers who are specially trained to work within the school community to help implement school safety initiatives as part of those leading school safety efforts. The Ohio Revised Code (ORC 3313.951) defines the requirements for training, agreements, and policies for SROs. They should be integral participants in school life and student learning.

6. Employ effective, positive school discipline that: (a) functions in concert with efforts to address school safety and climate; (b) is not simply punitive (e.g., zero tolerance); (c) is clear, consistent, and equitable; and (d) reinforces positive behaviors. Using security personnel or SROs primarily as a substitute for effective discipline policies does not contribute to school safety.

School discipline policies are ultimately the responsibility of the school principal; however, all school staff play a role in their effective development and implementation. Quality discipline practices function in concert with efforts to address school safety and a positive school climate. Ohio law requires all schools to implement a PBIS Framework to increase positive school climate and cultivate caring relationships among the students and staff. When PBIS is implemented with fidelity, it consistently reinforces positive behavior and decreases the use of exclusionary discipline including suspension and expulsion. Additionally, this structure allows for the use of restorative practices that seek to build positive relationships within the school community.

In contrast, overly harsh and punitive measures, such as zero tolerance policies, lead to reduced safety, connectedness, and feelings of belonging, and have historically been unsuccessful at improving student behavior or the overall school climate. Additionally, utilizing SROs or other security personnel primarily as a substitute for effective discipline policies is inappropriate, and does not contribute to school safety or students' perceptions of being safe. Exclusionary discipline practices have been found to disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities, when exclusively or overly relied upon or when improperly utilized.

Effective school discipline:

• Is viewed within the context of a learning opportunity and reinforces positive behaviors to replace negative behaviors;

• Is clear, consistent, and equitably applied to all students;

• Employs culturally competent practices;

• Safeguards the well-being of all students and staff;

• Keeps students in school and out of the juvenile justice system; and

• Incorporates family involvement.

7. **Consider the context of each school and district and provide services that are most needed, appropriate, and culturally sensitive to a school's unique student populations and learning communities.**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating safe and successful schools. To be most effective, schools need to assess the structures and resources already in place and determine what additional resources are needed. Schools can then provide universal, secondary, and tertiary interventions that are most appropriate and culturally sensitive to their unique student populations and learning communities. Additionally, decisions regarding appropriate security measures, including the use of SROs, should be determined by each school's leadership team.

8. **Acknowledge that sustainable and effective change takes time, and that individual schools will vary in their readiness to implement improvements and should be afforded the time and resources to sustain change over time.**

School districts will vary considerably in their readiness to change and in their ability to accept the suggestions included within this framework. Recognizing that sustainable change takes time both to improve acceptability and allow for full implementation will help set districts up for success rather than setting unrealistic goals. Efforts for change should not be abandoned if goals are not immediately met, as frequent programmatic changes lead to more resistance to change among school personnel in the future.

School Boards

School boards play an important role in setting the tone for school safety and student support efforts for their districts. As in many other areas, school boards are responsible for setting the vision in what safety should look like in their districts. From setting the vision, boards should also craft policy in support of the vision, oversee accountability, and foster relationships that in support of safe and supportive schools. At the end of the day, if boards are fully engaged in these efforts related to safety and student support, they will be supporting their ultimate goal of student success and well-being.

Superintendent and District Administrators

The superintendent, along with other districts administrators, also have critical roles in carrying out school safety and student support efforts districtwide. For instance, the superintendent is responsible for communicating to district and campus staff the priorities for the district, including those that pertain to safety and student support. The superintendent also ensures that district staff and departments have the resources and time to dedicate to critical areas of school safety. Likewise, other district administrators and department staff ensure that campus administrators and their teams have the resources they need to carry out initiatives, programs, and best practices to support students. This might mean creating systems and processes to facilitate key safety and support activities, developing resources such as curriculum, or being available for coaching/guidance on particular issues. Collectively, the superintendent and other district administrators ensure that the board's vision for safety and support is understood and that campuses have the capacity and resources to carry out that vision.

School Principals

Effective principals and assistant principals recognize the potential they have to create a school environment where teachers thrive, and students achieve their greatest potential in a safe and nurturing school setting. As instructional leaders, principals maintain a constant presence in the school and in classrooms, listening to and observing what is taking place, assessing needs, and getting to know teachers and students. Principals set high expectations and standards for the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of all students. They bring together a wide range of stakeholders within the school community and work to create a vision that reflects the full range and value of a school's mission.

Principals encourage the development of the whole child by supporting the physical and mental health of children, as well as their social and emotional well-being, which is reinforced by a sense of safety and self-confidence. High-quality early childhood education and learning experiences are crucial to an elementary level principal's shared vision to shape the school culture and instructional leadership. School leaders must mobilize the staff, students, parents, and community around the mission and shared values, as well as school improvement goals and set the parameters of high expectations for the school. Effective practice requires:

• Building consensus on a vision that reflects the core values of the school community to support student safety and well-being;

• Valuing and using diversity to enhance the learning of the entire school community;

• Broadening the framework for child development beyond academics to supporting the whole child through the PBIS framework; and

• Developing a learning culture that is adaptive, collaborative, innovative, and supportive by taking into account the contributions of every member of the school staff.

There are many actions a principal can take to promote comprehensive school safety, including:

• Establish a school leadership team that includes key personnel: principals, teachers, school-employed mental health professionals, instruction/curriculum professionals, school resource/safety officer, and a staff member skilled in data collection and analysis.

• Assess and identify needs, strengths, and gaps in existing services and supports (e.g., availability of school and community resources, unmet student mental health needs) that address the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

• Evaluate the safety of the school building and school grounds by examining the physical security features of the campus.

• Review how current resources are being applied, for example:

• Are school employed mental health professionals providing training to teachers and support staff regarding resiliency and risk factors?

• Do mental health staff participate in grade-level team meetings and provide ideas on how to effectively meet students' needs?

• Is there redundancy in service delivery?

• Are multiple overlapping initiatives occurring in different parts of the school or being applied to different sets of students?

• Implement an integrated approach that connects behavioral and mental health services and academic instruction and learning (e.g., are mental health interventions being integrated into an effective discipline or classroom management plan?).

• Provide adequate time for staff planning and problem solving via regular team meetings and professional learning communities. Identify existing and potential community partners, develop memoranda of understanding to clarify roles and responsibilities, and assign appropriate school staff to guide these partnerships, such as school-employed mental health professionals and principals.

• Provide professional development for school staff and community partners addressing school climate and safety, positive behavior, and crisis prevention, preparedness, and response.

• Engage students and families as partners in developing and implementing policies and practices that create and maintain a safe school environment.

School-based Behavioral Health and Wellness Professionals

Many professionals within a school help to support students' positive mental health and wellbeing. This includes school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, school wellness coordinators, and other specialized instructional support personnel. For the purposes of these recommendations, however, we are focusing on the professionals who serve in critical leadership roles in terms of school safety, positive school climate, and providing school-based mental health promotion, prevention and support services: school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school wellness coordinators. Their training and expertise help link mental health, behavior, environmental factors (e.g., family, classroom, school, community), instruction, and learning. Each of these professionals helps to create school environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to learning. Each may deliver similar services such as counseling, social–emotional skill instruction, and consultation with families and teachers; however, each profession has its own unique focus based upon its specializations, which result in different, albeit interrelated, services. The specific services and expertise of individual practitioners may vary, but the following describes the core competencies and specialized instructional services of each profession.

Counselors

School counselors are generally the first school-employed mental health professional to interact with students as they commonly are involved in the provision of universal learning supports to the whole school population. School counselors have specialized knowledge of curriculum and instruction and help screen students for the basic skills needed for successful transition from cradle to college and career. School counselors focus on helping students'

address their academic, personal/social, and career development goals and needs by designing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student success. School counselors work to promote safe learning environments for all members of the school community and regularly monitor and respond to behavior issues that impact school climate, such as bullying, student interpersonal struggles, and student–teacher conflicts. Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the school counselor, teachers, families, and other educators to create an environment promoting student achievement, active engagement, equitable access to educational opportunities, and a rigorous curriculum for all students.

School Psychologist

School psychologists typically have extensive knowledge of learning, motivation, behavior, childhood disabilities, assessment, evaluation, and school law. School psychologists specialize in analyzing complex student and school problems and selecting and implementing appropriate evidence-based interventions to improve outcomes at home and school. School psychologists consult with teachers and parents to provide coordinated services and supports for students struggling with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral problems, and those experiencing anxiety, depression, emotional trauma, grief, and loss. They are regular members of school crisis teams and collaborate with school administrators and other educators to prevent and respond to crises. They have specialized training in conducting risk and threat assessments designed to identify students at-risk for harming themselves or others. School psychologists' training in evaluation, data collection, and interpretation can help ensure that decisions made about students, the school system, and related programs and learning supports are based on appropriate evidence.

Social Workers

Social workers have special expertise in understanding family and community systems and linking students and their families with the community services that are essential for promoting student success. School social workers' training includes specialized preparation in cultural diversity, systems theory, social justice, risk assessment and intervention, consultation and collaboration, and clinical intervention strategies to address the mental health needs of students. They work to remedy barriers to learning created because of poverty, inadequate health care, and neighborhood violence. School social workers often focus on providing supports to vulnerable populations of students that have a high risk for truancy and dropping out of school, such as homeless and foster children, migrant populations, students transitioning between school and treatment programs or the juvenile justice system, or students experiencing domestic violence. They work closely with teachers, administrators, parents, and other educators to provide coordinated interventions and consultation designed to keep students in school and help their families access the supports needed to promote student success.

School Behavioral Health & Wellness Coordinator

School Behavioral Health and Wellness Coordinators are responsible for providing leadership and direction to the overall school behavioral health and wellness efforts in a school or district. An effective school wellness coordinator will have experience with effective networking among diverse groups and community partners, facilitating complex planning processes, and understanding of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention best practices. Their work includes the development of a comprehensive plan to promote effective integration of the activities and efforts of the multiple service systems. From the outset, the School Behavioral Health & Wellness Coordinator coordinates planning, implementing, evaluating, sustaining, and innovating their Student Assistance Program practices, Staff Wellness activities, along with health education curriculum and instructional support. The School Behavioral Health & Wellness Coordinator develops and implements a clear evaluation plan for both process variables (e.g., implementation) and outcome variables (e.g., mental health and substance use); obtains feedback and data from diverse stakeholders, using multiple methods of data collection, and uses that data to inform decision-making.

School-based Security & Law Enforcement

The presence of school resource officers, or security directors or private security, in schools has become an important part of the duty to protect students and staff on campus. Families and school officials in communities around the country benefit from a more effective relationship with local police as part of a school safety plan.

Specialized knowledge of the law, local, and national crime trends and safety threats, people and places in the community, and the local juvenile justice system combine to make SROs critical members of schools' policy-making teams when it comes to environmental safety planning and facilities management, school safety policy, and emergency response preparedness.

To fully realize the benefits of the presence of local police, the SROs must be trained properly. Officers' law-enforcement knowledge and skill combine with specialized SRO training for their duties in the education setting. This training focuses on the special nature of school campuses, student needs and characteristics, and the educational and custodial interests of school personnel. SROs, as a result, possess a skill set unique among both law enforcement and education personnel that enables SROs to protect the community and the campus while supporting schools' educational mission. In addition to traditional law enforcement tasks, such as investigating whether drugs have been brought onto campus, SROs' daily activities cover a wide range of supportive activities and programs depending upon the type of school to which an SRO is assigned. This can include conducting law-related education sessions in the classroom, meeting with the school safety team, conducting safety assessments of the campus, and problem solving with students or faculty. Trained and committed SROs are well suited to effectively protect and serve the school community. They contribute to the safe-schools team by ensuring a safe and secure campus, educating students about law-related topics, and mentoring students as informal counselors and role models.

All School Staff

Although some staff have a more defined role in school safety, all school and district staff should be engaged in school safety efforts. All staff includes district level administrators and support staff, teaching staff, campus support and administrative staff, transportation, nurses, cafeteria workers, librarians, etc. Supporting students who need it and being aware of your surrounding and reporting suspicious behavior are activities that all staff can support. It is imperative that all staff, at a minimum, are aware of the systems, approaches, and activities that support a safe school environment and how to engage these as needed.

CONCLUSION

Ohio's Comprehensive School Safety Framework describes the components necessary for creating a collaborative approach to physical and emotional school safety to meet the needs of the whole child. The guide describes engagement with a cross-system team of decision makers needed to inform a process to provide evidence-based practices in a multi-tiered system of support. Comprehensive school safety is not necessarily a substantial change in how school safety is achieved, but a more effective and efficient way for school teams and partners to work together and address physical and emotional safety in Ohio schools.

A comprehensive approach requires collaboration among district and school personnel responsible for leading and implementing physical and emotional safety. It requires these personnel to design a process that integrates and connects physical and emotional safety partners, data, and practices. Together, they develop a system that prevents physical and emotional harm, mitigates threats, responds to and helps students and staff recover from incidents related to school safety.

Ohio's schools have policies, programs and supports to create physically and emotionally safe environments for students. To ensure physical and emotional safety, including:

- Emergency management plans;
- Emergency exercises and drills;
- PBIS framework with tiered supports;
- Crises intervention teams;
- Universal prevention programs; and
- Threat assessment teams and plans.

Schools have existing teams and initiatives that include students, caregivers and community members that can serve as integral partners providing a cycle of comprehensive school safety. Schools can draw upon the expertise of the following types of teams when developing their comprehensive safety process.

- Student assistance programs;
- Anti-bullying policies;
- Partnerships with community providers and first responders;
- Anonymous reporting systems;
- District leadership, building or teacher based teams;
- Threat assessment team;
- Safety and security team;
- Positive behavior intervention support team;
- Student assistance program;
- Crisis Intervention Team; and
- Multi-tiered systems of support.