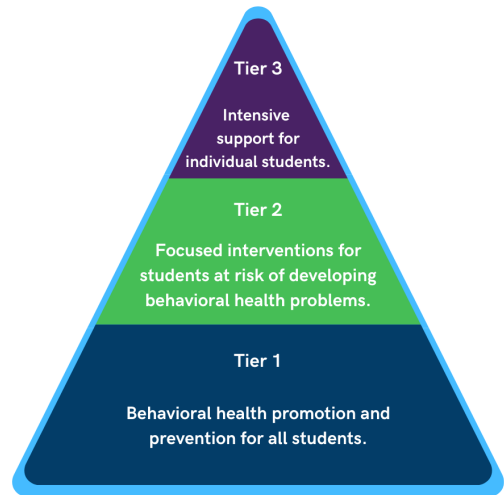




## DC's School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program Bridges Gap Between Students and Vital Services

### What is the School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program?

The School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program (SBBH) takes a public health approach to promoting children's mental and behavioral health. DC's Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) to place at least one full-time clinician in every DC Public School (DCPS) and public charter school. The goal of SBBH is to provide an array of behavioral health services at three different tiers of support that address school-wide, targeted, and intensive student behavioral health needs.



Thanks to the District's leadership and historic investment in children's behavioral health, the SBBH expansion program now includes all 251 DCPS and public charter schools – **and thousands more kids can access the critical services they need.**

### How Does SBBH Work?

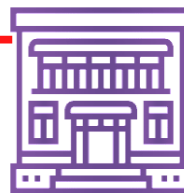
SBBH relies on collaboration between key DC public health and education agencies, CBOs, and local schools. Through this interconnected system, SBBH clinicians can provide critical behavioral health services to all students in DC public schools year-round.

#### Community-Based Organizations



Provides clinicians for SBBH.

#### Department of Behavioral Health



Full time clinical supervisors to support clinicians in schools.

#### CBO clinicians

Integrated with school behavioral health team, school leaders, and parent community.

Assesses school needs and develops plan to meet those needs.

#### Community of Practice

Funds Community of Practice to facilitate collaboration, problem-solving and sharing of best practices across SBBH.

Funds two positions at OSSE and DCPS.

#### Individual schools



Provide behavioral health services to students.

#### Office of the State Superintendent of Education & DC Public Schools

Support SBBH implementation on the school side.





## Why Do We Need SBBH?

In the District and throughout the nation, pediatric mental health continues to be a top concern for healthcare providers, educators, families, and our youth. There is an ongoing and intensifying behavioral health crisis for children and youth, with increases in depression, anxiety, trauma, substance abuse, and other behavioral health conditions, exacerbated by issues such as public safety, gun violence, socioeconomic forces, and residual impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. DC's most recent Youth Behavioral Health Risk Survey showed over 19% of middle school students and over 25% of high schoolers reported that their mental health was "not good" most of the time. While this crisis continues to escalate, children and youth face major barriers to accessing the care that they need, when they need it. Given that students spend most of their time in school, SBBH is one of DC's best tools for improving student access to behavioral health care.

## Access to SBBH Has Led to Better Student Outcomes

We value the positive feedback provided by clinicians so far – as well as their demonstrated impact on the well-being of District children and families:

- **From Victoria Isola, Simon Elementary School (Ward 8)**

I started working with a student in January 2020. He had a hard time expressing what was bothering him and would shut down and start crying. We have been working on learning emotions, self-regulation, coping skills, using 'I' statements, brainstorming solutions and picking the best solution for conflicts. He has made great improvement in our sessions, in school, and at home. His mom reported that he is able to tell her what is bothering him without shutting down and crying. [In] our last session... he expressed that he was excited and proud of himself!

- **From Molly Zinkgraf, Jefferson Middle School Academy (Ward 6)**

A student was referred to me during the pandemic due to lack of engagement in school, sleeping most of the day, and reports of anger toward family members in response to his father's incarceration. I supported the student in developing coping tools to help with difficult emotions during the pandemic. He was discharged in October due to his progress and meeting his treatment goals. Today, the student is a member of the football team, receives multiple positive referrals from teachers, and is on track for the honor roll. He reports feeling excited about applying to high school and continuing to play football.

We urge the Mayor and the Council to continue providing the essential funding needed to fully realize SBBH's benefits – and to ensure that critical behavioral health services are accessible to thousands of DC children and families now and in the years to come.

**For more information, contact Tami Weerasingha-Cote at [tweerasi@childrenslawcenter.org](mailto:tweerasi@childrenslawcenter.org) or Amber Rieke at [arieke@childrenslawcenter.org](mailto:arieke@childrenslawcenter.org).**

*The Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Coalition's vision is to ensure DC has a fully integrated behavioral health care system in which all students, children, youth, and families have timely access to high-quality, consistent, affordable, and culturally responsive care that meets their needs and enables them to thrive.*