What to Learn from Your State's ESSA Plan

In their State ESSA Plans, states must describe, under Title I, how they will support LEAs and schools to improve "school conditions for student learning" through reducing instances of harassment and bullying.[7]

Guidance for School Improvement

Bullying includes student-on-student harassment on the basis of sex, race, national origin, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability, as well as any unwanted, aggressive behavior among children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Increasingly, cyberbullying (bullying online, such as through social media) is also a consideration for schools.[8]

Addressing school climate as a school improvement strategy is the main research-based strategy for reducing incidences of bullying and harassment.[9] Addressing bullying in this way can include: engagement of families, staff and students about the reality and effects of bullying and cyberbullying; introducing opportunities for students to be involved in special interest groups, hobbies, clubs, or teams; setting up open lines of safe reporting and communication; and training parents, staff, and leaders to model and be able to talk about kindness and appropriate responses when bullying does occur (e.g. implementing restorative practices).

LEA and school leaders can play an important role in addressing bullying, student mental health, and suicide prevention, and will need to work across disciplines and partner with departments of health and health professionals, social services for families and young people (e.g. Medicaid), and rely on the expertise and experience of social workers, school counselors, special education educators, and those closest to students (parents and families, peers) for a complete picture of students' needs and how to support them.

Consider working with outside services like Teenline or Lifeline, or local suicide prevention organizations (e.g. Arizona's La Frontera-EMPACT), working to grow and support school-based students groups (e.g. Gay-Straight Alliance for LGBT Youth) and mentoring programs, and partnering with outside organizations that provide safe spaces for young people (e.g. Big Brothers Big Sisters , faith-based youth groups). Remember, too, that supporting staff and families around their own mental health is an important step toward better supporting students, which your school's social worker can and should support.

Find Support for this Strategy in ESSA

TITLE I, PART A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
TITLE IV, PART A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
TITLE IV, PART B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

7. http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/School-Discipline-Provisions-in-the-Every-Student-Succeeds-Act.pdf
8. https://www.meganmeierfoundation.org/cyberbullying-social-media.html
9. https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/build-safe-environment/index.html

Essential Stakeholders

✓ Students and families, including students with disabilities, English learners, system-involved youth, chronically absent students, students in the foster system or who are experiencing homelessness, students affected by trauma, and others.

✓ Educators and educator trainers (e.g. Teachers Unite)

✓ Youth development organizations and out-of-school time providers

✓ Social media experts

✓ Anti-bullying campaign experts

✓ Civil rights organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) that promote the social and emotional welfare of young children and families, including national and local advocates (e.g. Healthy Schools Campaign)

Ask the Experts

✓ School Climate and Bullying Prevention (National School Climate Center)

✓ Stop Bullying—Prevention Resources

✓ Ending Institutionalized Bullying In Our Schools (Desis Rising Up and Moving)

Spotlight on Washington
Partnership for Suicide Prevention

The Washington Department of Health works with Forefront Suicide Prevention in Schools (FIS) in high schools across the state. FIS is a three-year program designed to transform school and community culture around suicide. This three-year program begins with building a leadership team at the school site with parents, students, teachers, counselors, and school leaders. These leaders then take the messages back to their own communities (e.g. parent-parent training).