

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS

**Prepared by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
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Do schools have mental health clinicians?

Massachusetts schools usually have a **mental health support staff** available for all students. This can include guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, and school psychologists. The type of staff available might vary between school districts. Most school districts have websites that list the staff at the schools, and it is likely that you can find out what personnel are available by going to your school's website.

Do schools have health centers?

Massachusetts also has a **School-Based Health Center Program**. This program funds health center within some of the schools that are operated by outside providers, such as hospitals, community health centers, and local health department.

Resources:

DPH, School Based Health Centers, <http://www.mass.gov/dph/schoolbasedhealthcenters>

Mass. Coalition of School-Based Health Centers, <http://www.ma4sbhc.org/>

Do schools have connections to mental health services in the community?

Schools should have connections to local **Community Service Agencies** (CSAs). CSAs provide wrap-around, home based services for qualified families whose children receive MassHealth services and have serious emotional disturbance. Schools can refer youth to CSAs.

Resources:

Mass. Behavioral Health Partnership, Community Service Agencies by Service Area or Specialty Population, <https://www.masspartnership.com/provider/CommunityResources.aspx>

MHLAC, Access to Children's Behavioral Health Initiative Services in Massachusetts, http://www.mhlac.org/Docs/cbhi_services.pdf. (See links to more information.)

What is the effect of the state Anti-Bullying Law?

The state **Anti-Bullying Law** requires that schools implement training for all school staff about bullying and its effect, and so eventually all teachers will be able to assist students to some

degree, and can certainly help students in accessing other mental health resources within the schools.¹

Resources:

DESE, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Resources, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bullying/>

What services are available for youth with trauma histories?

Children with trauma histories can face more difficulties learning, forming relationships and succeeding in school. However, teachers cannot always easily identify traumatized children, which can make it difficult to provide extra attention if needed. Schools should strive to create a trauma-sensitive environment to benefit all children – those with trauma histories and those who learn alongside them.²

Some schools have received the **Trauma-Sensitive School Grant**, which provides funding for schools to adopt strategies to become trauma sensitive.

A strategy for trauma-sensitive schools should include these guiding principles:

- Helping educators become aware of trauma symptoms and their effect on classroom learning and behavior;
- Spending less time on disciplining students and focusing more on teaching and learning;
- Using therapeutic and positive behavioral supports.³

Resources:

Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, <http://www.massadvocates.org/trauma-learning.php>

DESE, Trauma Sensitive Schools, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/tss/>

¹ G.L. c. 71, § 370(d).

² Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda* 1 (2005), http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/Database.aspx?EntryId=1372&Command=Core_Download.

³ Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda* 6 (2005), http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/Database.aspx?EntryId=1372&Command=Core_Download.