

Expand access to support services in schools

Fund and prioritize direct clinical mental health services in schools.

- By 7th grade, **40% of students have experienced a mental health issue** like depression or anxiety.¹
- Overall, **less than 20% of students get the help they need**. Of those who do, more than 3 in 4 get help in schools.²

Students are **21 times more likely** to seek out mental health care in school-based settings compared to community health settings.³

Schools that employ more mental health providers see:⁴

- Improved school safety
- Increased attendance rates
- Lower rates of suspension and expulsion
- Higher graduation rates
- Improved workforce preparation

Frequently, mental health service providers in schools are called upon to complete tasks or fill in gaps that are not providing direct services to students. Tennessee is already struggling to meet recommended student-to-provider ratios in schools thus it is critical that these mental health providers' sole focus be direct mental health and counseling services.

Unaddressed mental health problems and family stressors promote⁵

- Behavior problems
- Bullying
- Absenteeism
- Academic difficulties
- Dropping out
- Violence at school
- Domestic violence
- Risk of state custody

These may cause serious problems for individual students and families and have negative effects on school climate.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Mental health treatment returns **\$7** for every **\$1** spent⁶

Substance abuse programs can return up to **\$21** for every **\$1** spent⁷

Fund Family Resource Centers in every school district and increase service capability in districts where only a small portion of students can currently be served.

- Even before the pandemic, almost **1 in 6** Tennessee children experienced food insecurity.⁸
- In the most recent pandemic data, more than **1 in 8 Tennessee households with children reported housing insecurity** and more than a third reported difficulty paying regular household expenses.⁹

In FY20, FRCs offered more than 50 different services and supports to Tennessee families:¹⁰

- 96% provided a **food bank**
- 92% issued **backpacks** to students
- 91% supplied a **clothing bank**
- 89% offered **help on truancy and attendance**
- 88% provided **housing assistance**