

STUDENTS IN NEED

5 steps for creating a holistic mental health program

Modern Solutions for Modern Problems

eBook



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Introduction

Today, administrators, educators, and clinicians face a double challenge as they work to guide students toward graduation: the mental health crisis in America and a shortage of providers available to meet ever-growing needs for comprehensive therapeutic intervention, especially for children and teens. According to CDC data, from March 2020 to October 2020 alone, mental health–related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits.¹ As the numbers rise surrounding the mental health challenges our young people face, it's clear schools, districts, and educators will be more closely involved helping struggling students weather the storm. One powerful way educators and providers can step in to help to meet that need is by establishing a holistic behavioral and mental health program in your school, agency, or private therapy practice.

Mental, emotional, and behavioral health is an important part of children's overall health and well-being, affecting how they think, feel, and act, as well as their learning and development. These prosocial behaviors play a critical role in how children handle stress, relate to others, learn new things, and make healthy choices. Yet, children's mental health and social wellness are one of the most underserved areas in America today.

Multiple, complex, and interrelated factors, including family and community environments, and varying access to mental health services, impact an individual's mental health. An effective mental health program will integrate an understanding of these interwoven impacts and provide the support children and teens need so they can function with resilience in their everyday lives.

The aim of this eBook is to offer best practices to help educators manage the challenges of ongoing student mental health problems and to equip all adults involved in this effort with effective tools for building a holistic school-based mental health program that addresses student mental health issues and difficult behaviors.



Explore how an effective holistic school-based mental health program can be created as we walk you through the five essential steps to:

1. **Define** your needs for a mental health program
2. **Understand the options** available to you to design and implement a flexible and effective program
3. **Make decisions** regarding the best mental health program for your needs
4. **Prepare your team** for adopting your chosen program
5. **Develop ways to measure** the success of your program



More than 1 in 3

high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40% increase since 2009. In 2019, approximately one in six youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year, a 44% increase since 2009.²

6 in 10

parents have sought the help of teletherapy or online therapy services, according to 2023 OnePoll Child Burnout Survey data.³

1 per 500

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of one school psychologist per 500 students to provide comprehensive psychological services, but the current national ratio is estimated to be 1:1127, according to the NASP's analysis.⁴



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 01

Identify students' mental health needs

A first step is to get a clear picture of the mental health needs of the students you're working with. Before taking on this type of project, it's helpful to have an idea of the size and scope to prevent too narrow or too broad of a solution. Some of the data points that can help you define the scope are:

Student population

Determining which students need support and what level of support they need is an important place to start. Because they are noticeable, children who have outwardly presenting problems get the majority of the attention from adults. However, we also know that many students internalize. Others may never show a need at all until asked. Finding those who need support is an essential first step in planning.



A good place to start is:

- Universal mental health screening data.
 - Are you screening three times per year?
 - What percentage of students are meeting developmental benchmarks?
 - Of those who are not, what are the skills highlighted in the screening as your largest needs?
- Can your current mental health counseling program serve all the students identified or only a small percentage?
- Do you see the number of students below benchmark growing year over year? If so, does your program also have the flexibility to grow?



Staffing

Once you understand the population of need, the next step is to start planning how you get from where you are to where you want to be. Qualified staff shortages are impacting all school districts and these shortages can be an impediment to offering your ideal services.

Online technology may offer innovative ways for you to support your existing staff as they serve increasing numbers of students and help them become more efficient and less overburdened.

- Do you have onsite staff, or do you have access to, an adequate number of qualified clinicians who deliver mental health services?
- How heavy are their caseloads? In other words, do you consider your current staff-to-student ratio manageable and effective?
- If not, how many additional clinicians would you need to be able to provide sufficient help for your students?
- Have you considered using online resources to help meet your students' mental health needs? Such as online psychoeducational services and assessments?

Access to resources

Take a look at the tools and resources that are currently available to your mental health and behavioral intervention clinicians. Asking the following questions will help you and your team hone in on where there are program gaps and needs for improvement:

- What types of content, activities, and games do your clinicians have access to?
- Do clinicians rely on physical testing, assessment, and therapy materials? Are resource materials shared across staff and/or across sites?
- Is that content customizable for each student or session?
- Do the resources appeal to digital natives and have interactive components?
- Do your clinicians have access to digital tools for therapy delivery?
- If no, would access to customizable, digital resources help reduce the burden on staff to provide fresh and engaging support materials?
- Do they have access to quality mental health counseling materials and resources?





Training and support

Training is an integral step for your team to help them manage any significant changes in their work environment, including training on how to take best advantage of online resources.

- Do your clinicians have access to training resources to help ensure they are up to speed on the tools they are using in their practice?
- What types of support are available to clinicians throughout the day, from technical support to professional support?

Once you have thought about all of the questions, don't worry if your answers reveal you're finding it a difficult challenge to meet students' ever-increasing needs for mental health services. You are not alone! The pressures of today's mental health crisis and its impact on students and families are being felt by practitioners as well as administrators.

We're here to tell you that help is on the way—there ARE solutions you can take advantage of in varied and flexible ways.

Now, let's talk about solutions.



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 02

Introducing new ways to provide mental health services

Beginning in the 1990s, the application of online, or digital, therapy as an appropriate model for service delivery in behavioral and mental health, has been called a quiet revolution. Many clinicians as well as educators have developed new skills for working remotely and have found that technology is an effective way to engage students.

What are the benefits of digital mental health services as a solution to mitigate the challenges of today's increasing caseloads and shortage of providers? A full range of digital behavioral and mental health services, from staffing to online content, can be customized for any organization's specific needs.

The following factors detail options available for educators or administrators to choose from to customize a holistic mental health program that best suits your needs.

Staffing Solutions

Even when budgets allow additional hiring, school districts, agencies, and private practices that want to expand their mental health services are struggling to find enough qualified professionals to bring on board and attain adequate staffing levels that will reduce pressure and avoid burnout among current staff. Reducing caseloads and managing federal timelines can help retain valued team members. Presence's national network of licensed social workers and school psychologists who specialize in serving school children can fill the gap.



Software that allows you to conduct therapy sessions anywhere

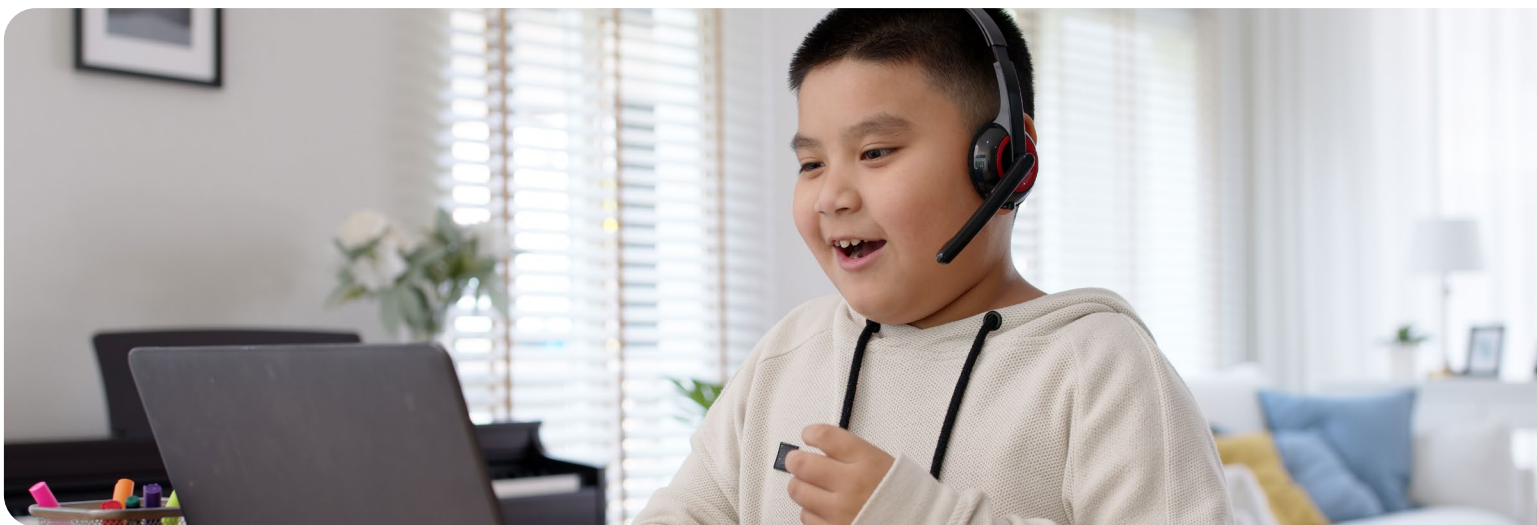
Clinicians can take advantage of the easy-to-master Kanga platform by Presence to help them work more efficiently, onsite or remotely. Resources for staff include our platform that enables delivery of online counseling sessions and social wellness programs. Its suite of online tools also includes an extensive library of digital content such as activities, games, and assessments.

Diagnostic and development screenings and assessments

Remote student assessment is used by thousands of schools nationwide to facilitate direct screening and identification of students who need behavioral and/or mental health services. Data-driven decision making can provide timely evaluations for student eligibility for mental health interventions and ensure that educators and administrators get the data they need for planning. Presence offers social-emotional and behavioral evaluation and assessment services as well as a full library of evaluations from leading publishers covering many disciplines to include: Cognitive and Ability Processing, Speech-Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Academic Achievement, Assessments for Spanish Speaking Learners, and many more.

Mental health counseling and social wellness groups

Presence's nationwide network of highly qualified behavioral and mental health professionals can work online or onsite and one-on-one, with students or in small groups. We offer services that fit the student's need, which includes conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA), developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), and providing counseling services as determined by a BIP or an IEP. In addition to small groups, Presence provides intensive mental health services including individual counseling for students with significant needs or identified emotional challenges.



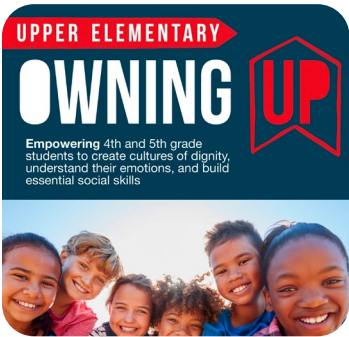
Curated library of resources

With an abundance of online resources at their fingertips, clinicians can free up time and energy better devoted to working directly with students. Presence has a curated library of curriculum and content focused on addressing behavioral and mental health needs, including programs such as:



Finding Your Power in Uncertain Times

A 6-week, trauma-informed group therapy program designed to help students struggling with life's current stressors—exclusively developed for Presence by Dr. Isaiah Pickens.



Tiny Guides and Owning Up

Two Cultures of Dignity programs that highlight the impact of social media and target emotional concepts to help students develop relationships.



Health World Education

This is a comprehensive mental health, social-emotional-learning program with resources that incorporate easy-to-use tools, materials, and activities to make learning fun.

There's a lot to choose from, right?
Let's see what solutions will be the best fit for your needs.



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 03

Select the solution that best fits your needs

When you're a newcomer to the digital world, it can be difficult to select the programs or services that will be right for the populations you serve. Presence can help you understand which solutions will be the best fit for your unique needs. Consider these outcomes when planning priorities for your mental health program.

Will this solution...

1. Provide a short term solution or a long term solution?
2. Empower my staff to do their jobs effectively?
3. Reach and serve more students/children?
4. Set my staff up with the right training to be effective?

Leverage the power of the Presence network

You have the option to obtain the full range of services you need by contracting with the Presence network of clinicians. When we become your partners, we work together in a collaborative process to evaluate what is needed and develop a plan. We will help you match clinicians to your students' specific needs and schedules and help you deliver consistent services with minimized cancellations.

Discover the dynamic software platform designed for clinicians by clinicians

We can help you clarify your needs by scheduling a free, no-commitment consultation with a Presence expert to discuss how our platform may benefit your clinicians and students. You can take a tour of the platform that will introduce you to its unique digital practice and assessment content and show you how the platform can deliver engaging sessions to help students fulfill their potential. Presence's customer service includes assistance with training and licenses for your team and fast, personalized tech support.



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 04

Prepare your team for change

We know change is a constant and that it is inevitable, but it can also be difficult. That's why Presence ensures we will be a partner with you every step of the way.

Here are some tips to consider when it's time to roll out a new program internally.

Communication is key

When you have decided to adopt online technology solutions to support your behavioral and mental health clinicians, it is essential to orient your team to be ready for the changes you're introducing.

1. Take the time and put in the effort to keep everyone informed, involved, and engaged in the change process.
2. Be clear and honest at all times, and be sure people know exactly what's going to happen and when.
3. It's important to emphasize the ways in which your clinicians will benefit from new technological tools.
4. Give your team members opportunities to take ownership of workplace innovations, and that will make all the difference when it comes to adopting new tools and materials.
5. Communication is a two-way street. Be sure team members can ask questions, get answers, and express concerns.

Research by McKinsey on adopting digital tools in the work environment found that "when people are truly invested in change, it is 30 percent more likely to stick."



Provide training

Training is integral to support any significant change in process. Presence offers training on how to use a therapy platform, how to be prepared for a session, and how to make the most out of leveraging technology in-person or virtually.

1. We provide resources and dedicated support staff to manage clinicians' transition from conducting therapy sessions and teaching in person to utilizing the online platform.
2. Actual hands-on practice time is important for building staff confidence in using the tools, therapeutic techniques and resources, as well as with working with students in a virtual environment.
3. Clinicians need preparation for connecting and building rapport with parents and caregivers as partners working to make the most of in-home therapy.

Check in regularly with staff, students, and parents

Presence provides digital tools for all stakeholders to help maintain consistent, direct communications, so that staff are informed, clinicians are assessing how their students are doing from week to week, and parents feel part of the process.

We believe preparation is everything, and our suite of digital tools offers best practices for what you need to be well-prepared:

- Strategies for managing student focus and engagement
- Communication and training templates for parents to support sessions at home
- Ways to manage and monitor student environments remotely
- Ideas for making the most of the content and tools in the platform
- Instructions for the best camera angles, surroundings, and lighting for online sessions



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 05

Evaluate your program success

The last thing to consider is how to evaluate the success of your mental health program. What does success look like for you and your team? What return on investment do you want to get out of your program?

Here are some success metrics to keep top of mind:

Cost efficiencies

Digital solutions for mental health programs can be highly cost-effective, especially when compared with onsite-only programs where hiring costs and FTE benefits can easily skyrocket. Less driving time back and forth to different school sites to deliver in-person services saves on gas and mileage reimbursement, other travel expenses, and physical materials. This can be especially valuable for delivering services to students in remote rural areas. Digital programs are also space-efficient, eliminating the need to find more room to accommodate more clinicians, students, and sessions.

Time efficiencies

An efficient digital system facilitates the efficient management of scheduling and documentation, reducing or even eliminating the paperwork that many clinicians report to be a time-consuming burden that uses hours that could be better spent in more productive and rewarding sessions with students. Larger caseloads require even more paperwork, and make it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Kanga by Presence provides state-of-the-art documentation assistance that streamlines clinician workflows for greater efficiency and peace of mind.



“ Those who embrace the step of innovation...those who are able to say— ‘Now that I am remote, what can I actually do differently than when I was in person?’—that’s the step that, once [therapists] do that, they are moving mountains.”

– STEPHANIE TAYLOR,
Ed.S., NCSP

Vice President of Clinical
Innovation and Outreach at
Presence



Staff efficiencies and talent retention

Has working with Presence's mental health therapy services and platform helped to ensure that every clinician has a manageable caseload? Reducing heavy caseloads and managing backlogs help to prevent stress and burnout, which in turn can help retain talented team members. Clinicians may report that the digital tools make it easier to balance work, errands, everyday life, and commute time—all they need to do is log in.

Student engagement and positive outcomes

The best way to evaluate a mental health program is seeing its positive impact on student engagement and their resulting sustained progress. Presence's rich library of new, engaging activities and fun games can be customized to each student's unique interests to reach young people, put them at ease, and lengthen their attention spans in ways that can benefit them most.

“ I was surprised at how well the students interact via teletherapy as I thought there may be some challenges not being physically in the same room with the student. I was very pleased to find teletherapy to be just as effective as being in close physical proximity to the student. When I meet with students and other educators on the Presence platform, I feel like I am welcoming them into my home. It creates an engaging, comfortable interaction and merges my professionalism with my wish for everyone I interact with to feel the true joy I find in helping children reach their potential.”

**— ANGELA COYLE,
M.S.Ed.**



In summary

Taking action

Clinicians and special education professionals serve on the front lines of the vital work to support students and help them overcome mental health and behavioral issues that can hamper their growth and development as productive members of society. Presence, the leading provider of digital solutions for behavioral mental health counseling, is a true partner in your efforts, delivering the platform, services, network, and expertise you need. We care about helping you help kids. We are here for you.

Learn more about how we partner with clinicians, private practices, staffing agencies, and school districts across disciplines. Visit us: presence.com

Request a consultation today

Citations

1. Mental Health America, <https://mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america>, 2023.
2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [Mental health is a growing problem](#), May 2021.
3. OnePoll Child Burnout Survey, <https://www.presence.com/insights/child-burnout-a-growing-concern-for-parents-and-schools/>, 2023.
4. The National Association of School Psychologists, <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>, January 2023

Presence is unlocking the potential of schools and clinicians by removing traditional barriers to success through an elevated approach to teletherapy—addressing the national shortage of school clinicians.

As a trusted leader in teletherapy since 2009, Presence is innovating how schools assess and address student special education and mental health needs. By equipping the largest network of teletherapy providers with award-winning technology and end-to-end clinical support, Presence is meeting the needs of schools, students, and clinicians today—wherever they are. With over 6 million remote evaluations and teletherapy sessions conducted throughout the U.S., schools and teletherapists trust the experience and expertise of Presence, a pioneer in school-based teletherapy.

Presence is teletherapy, elevated.

