

# Project AWARE

ADVANCING  
WELLNESS  
AND  
RESILIENCE  
IN  
EDUCATION

Colorado's Project AWARE aims to build a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated school behavioral health services system that supports *every* student in Colorado in reaching their fullest potential in school and life.



The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) awarded the CO Dept of Education (CDE) \$10 million spread over five years to build infrastructure and expand the capacity of the state and three district partners around mental health.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) will collaborate with behavioral health stakeholders across the state to improve mental health awareness and response. In addition to broader, statewide activities, Project AWARE has partnered with three local education agencies (LEAs) to support best practices to inform Colorado schools and communities interested in accomplishing similar goals. These partner LEAs include Aurora Public Schools, Fountain-Fort Carson School District and Thompson School District.

The Project AWARE grant was awarded to 20 states to build state and local education agencies' capacity to develop a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated program to advance wellness and resilience in educational settings for school-aged youth by:

- Increasing literacy and awareness of behavioral health issues among school-aged youth
- Promoting social and emotional learning
- Connecting children, youth, and families who may have behavioral health issues with appropriate services
- Improving school climate
- Promoting positive mental health among youth and families through social and emotional learning
- Build the capacity and leadership to sustain community-based mental health promotion, prevention, early identification and treatment services
- Providing training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth to detect and respond to mental health issues in children and young adults

Workgroup and Advisory Council  
Collaboration with:

Youth-serving organizations  
Healthy Schools stakeholders  
LEA administrators and staff  
Mental health providers  
Youth  
Families and community members  
Juvenile justice  
State-funded School Health  
Professionals grant

## Statewide Approaches

To support communities and schools to increase access to school- and community-based mental health services, Project AWARE increases collaboration between state, local and building-level stakeholders to increase coordination of state and local policy, improve systems integration, strengthen cross-organizational resources and ensure sustainability of programs and funding. The model is based on an MTSS behavioral health framework. Behavioral health promotion is a significant component of the project, therefore, CDE has partnered with Mental Health First Aid Colorado to provide Mental Health First Aid training across the state.

# MAJOR GOALS AT A GLANCE

				
<p><u>Build state infrastructure and capacity</u> for implementing a coordinated, data-driven system for supporting the continuum of children's mental health needs with students, families, schools and communities.</p>	<p><u>Build LEA infrastructure and capacity</u> for implementing a coordinated, data-driven system for supporting the continuum of children's behavioral health needs with students, families, schools and communities.</p>	<p>Partner districts promote social, emotional and behavioral health while reducing risk factors leading to mental illness and violence by <u>implementing research-based programs, services and supports based on a their populations' data.</u></p>	<p><u>Increase awareness of mental health</u> issues among school-aged youth, reduce stigma and promote positive behavioral health as part of overall health and wellness which is essential to learning.</p>	<p>Develop models that <u>sustainably fund</u> the provision of high impact school and community-based behavioral health promotion and behavioral health services.</p>

## Local Education Agency Approaches

- Implement Mental Health First Aid training and other evidence-based programs to improve school climate, safety, substance abuse prevention and/or behavioral health promotion
- Link existing resources based on a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) behavioral health framework to support all students
- Streamline communication
- Leverage local funding
- Strengthen mental health partnerships and referral processes
- Improve collaboration with juvenile justice
- Engage youth and families in mental health promotion
- Collect data to drive efforts



Fountain • Fort Carson  
SCHOOL DISTRICT EIGHT



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Colorado's Project AWARE website:  
[www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/projectaware](http://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/projectaware)