

CENTERING WELLNESS

A ROADMAP FOR SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SCHOOLS

Updated 12/22/22



Santa Cruz County Office of Education
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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Overview | 4 |
| Facilities & Design | 6 |
| Staffing & Partnerships | 9 |
| Systems | 11 |
| Funding & Sustainability | 13 |
| Next Steps | 17 |

INTRODUCTION

The model of school-based Wellness Centers is gaining momentum because it fills a persistent gap, and meets a growing need. These facilities serve as on-campus hubs to connect students with counseling, mentoring, and peer-to-peer support, regardless of insurance status. When students have a safe and judgment-free space to access these services, they are empowered to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

Students' need for wellness and mental health support is only growing. More than 284,000 California youth cope with major depression, and two-thirds of those with depression do not receive treatment. Suicide rates for youth ages 10-18 increased 20% between 2019-2020, and remain the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Both in Santa Cruz County and nationwide, students report significant increases in persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness across all grade levels, and particularly among LGBTQ+ students and students of color. More than 75% of school staff surveyed earlier this year expressed concerns about student depression, anxiety and trauma, according to federal data. Similarly, providers report an increase in ER visits by youth for mental health related issues, alongside increases in referrals for county and non-profit provided services.

To address these needs, the Santa Cruz County School Districts and the County Office of Education are working together to enable each public high school in the county to open an on-campus Wellness Center that will offer universal, coordinated, and timely mental health-related services to all students through an easily accessible location. This inclusive environment reduces barriers to access services, maximizing student engagement and success. In fact, research shows students are 10 to 21 times more likely to receive behavioral health services when they are provided on a school campus. These Wellness Centers will also serve as a key linkage point foundational to the success of all families and students in our region.

This Roadmap to Wellness is presented as a tool to assist school districts and partners with understanding and implementing this vision. It includes an overview of the essential attributes of a Wellness Center, including the staffing, facilities, and sustainable funding models necessary for success. Because of the evolving nature of relevant resources, best-practices, and funding mechanisms, this roadmap is intended as a living document that will be updated as necessary.

A Wellness Experience

Gabriel is showing signs of distress. Luckily, when his teacher observes he is withdrawing from his classmates and work, she knows just what to do. She encourages Gabriel to visit the on-campus Wellness Center. This is a space that is always open and available to students, and staffed with familiar faces. Gabriel is reluctant at first, but he's heard about the Wellness Center and decides to check it out. He arrives and is immediately greeted and assessed for his level of need. Because his need isn't critical, he waits for a few minutes in a comfortable, inviting room painted in warm colors — with engaging activities and coping skills available. Soon he meets with the on-campus clinician, who has seen students in Gabriel's situation many times. After talking to Gabriel for just 15 minutes, she learns that he would benefit from consistent support and makes an appointment for him to follow up with her next week. Gabriel says he doesn't have insurance, but it doesn't matter. All services are freely available to students, regardless of insurance status. She also invites Gabriel to drop in at any time — with or without an appointment, to use the Wellness Center whenever he needs it. And should Gabriel ever need more intensive support, the Clinician knows she has a team of community partners already within the Wellness Center and ready to consult.

OVERVIEW

At its core, a Wellness Center is a dedicated, on-campus space that is always staffed, safe, welcoming, and accessible to students. Two of those staff positions are essential: A Wellness Navigator and Wellness Clinician/Coordinator, positions described in detail in the Staffing & Partnerships section of the Roadmap to Wellness. It is also vital that the Wellness Center serves as a linkage to integrated systems of support, both on and off campus. Finally, it is important to ensure that each Wellness Center is built from the ground up with a sustainable funding plan, enabling it to remain in operation for many years to come.

Essential Attributes

Facilities

- Wellness Room
- Reception Area
- Office Spaces
- Collaboration Room

Staffing and Partnerships

- Wellness Navigator
- Wellness Clinician/Coordinator
- Interns
- Community Organizations
- Student Voice

Services

- Mental health screening
- Intervention
- Counseling
- Crisis Intervention
- Linkage to other avenues of mental health support

Sustainable Funding

- 2024 Insurance, Medical
- Grants
- LCFF
- Capital Campaigns





Outcomes

- Stigma Reduction of Mental Health Care
 - Reducing negative perception of mental health that would prevent students from accessing services
- Open Door to Wellness and Connection to Services
 - Reducing wait time to mental health services and providing linkage to services inside the Wellness Center and/or in the community
- Integrated systems of support that address the social determinants of health
 - Eliminating barriers of cost and transportation as well as limiting duplicated services by using an integrated approach
- Prevention and Early Intervention
 - Reducing need for intensive care by providing screening, counseling, and general mental health awareness information and activities
- Social and Emotional Skill Building
 - Supporting school-wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health efforts while providing a space for students practice these skills

FACILITIES & DESIGN

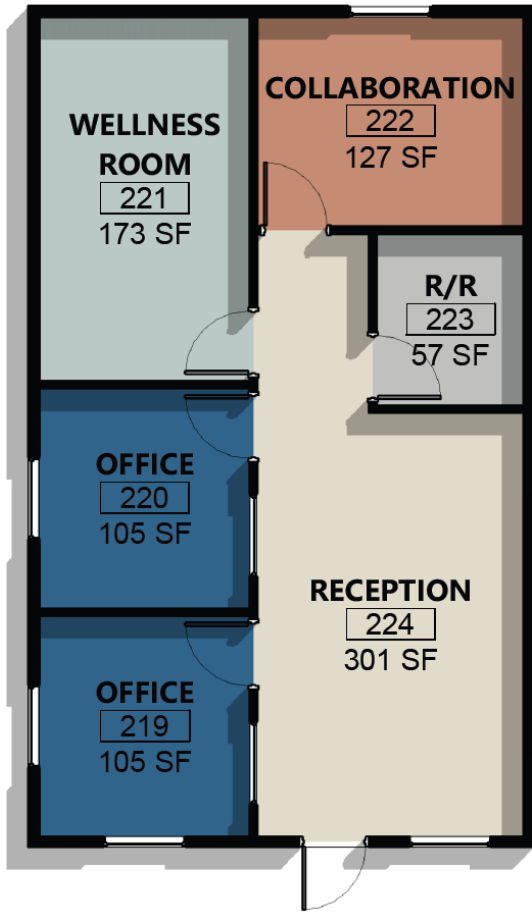
The Wellness Center facility is thoughtfully designed and includes the required components below and are essential in the delivery of services for students. These welcoming, inclusive spaces ensure students feel safe utilizing the Wellness Center and limits the stigma around mental health. The soothing atmosphere is designed to foster student and family comfort and calm. Warm and soft colors promote quiet and concentration as well as natural light to relieve anxiety. Several layouts variations are provided as examples of how to address schools' respective needs as well as facility and budget constraints, which may lead to converting a classroom, utilizing an on-site converted portable, or on-site new construction. For additional design details, refer to the [Wellness Center design presentation](#).

Core Components

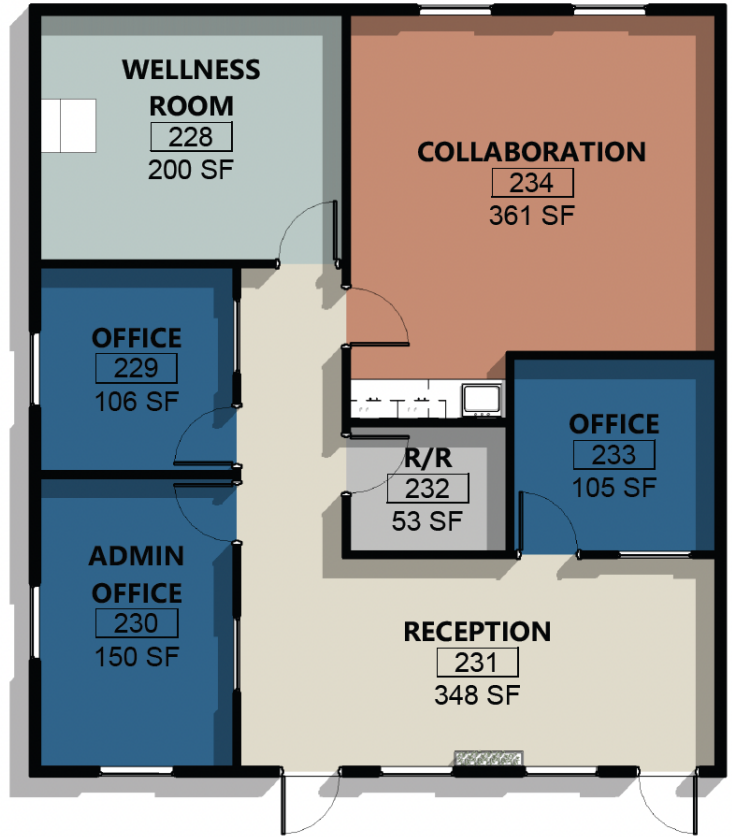
| SPACE | PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES | FUNCTION |
|---|---|---|
| Reception Area  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A front desk for the Wellness Center Navigator ■ Storage and organization ■ Small waiting area with soft seating and movable tables ■ Console table with literature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student is welcomed, asked to sign in, and screened for level of response needed ■ Student waits for next available Wellness Center staff member ■ Student is able to use sensory items and/or read information while waiting |
| Office Spaces  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Private and inviting executive office with desk and chair ■ Typical office suite with computer and phone ■ Comfortable and movable guest seating for small group conversations ■ Noise-canceling machine for privacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wellness Center staff (LEA and Partner Organizations) use this office for direct and indirect services ■ Direct Services: Meeting with students individually or in a small group (2-3) to provide counseling, interventions, services, and/or crisis response. ■ Indirect Services: Data, bills for services, case management, care coordination, and community partner coordination for tiered mental health support |
| Wellness Room  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open space for ease of movement ■ Large enough to accommodate multiple people ■ Soft movable seating ■ Multi-sensory space ■ Calming mural with soft wall panels ■ Located in the line of vision to Reception Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students can use this space for deescalation and as a safe space to use healthy coping skills before returning to class ■ Wellness Center staff can use this space for group counseling |
| Collaboration Room  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conference table, seating for 8-10 people ■ Close proximity to the wellness center staff ■ Space with kitchenette with sink, refrigerator, microwave, and storage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wellness Center Staff can use this space for their weekly team collaboration, monthly school-wide tiered team meeting, and for services such as group counseling, therapy, and other tiered interventions. ■ May be used for student group meetings related to the Wellness Center such as a Student Mental Health Leadership Group, Student Wellness Advisory Group, or Peer Counseling. |
| Restrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ADA Restroom, single occupancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Single Occupancy for students or staff |

Sample Layouts

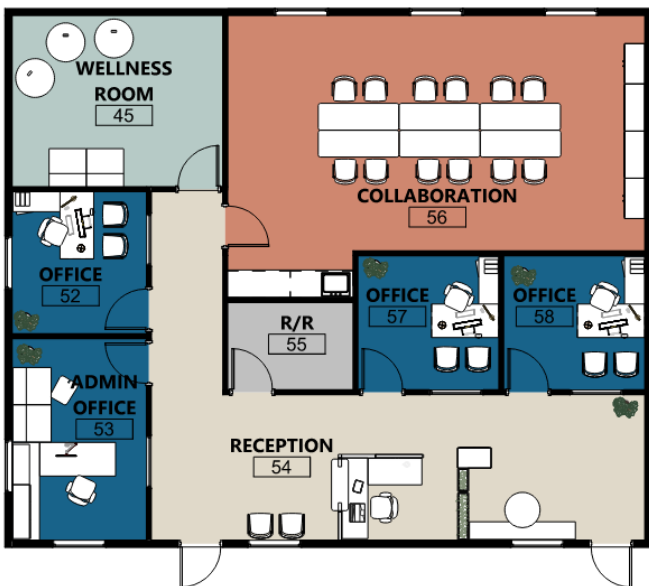
LAYOUT 1



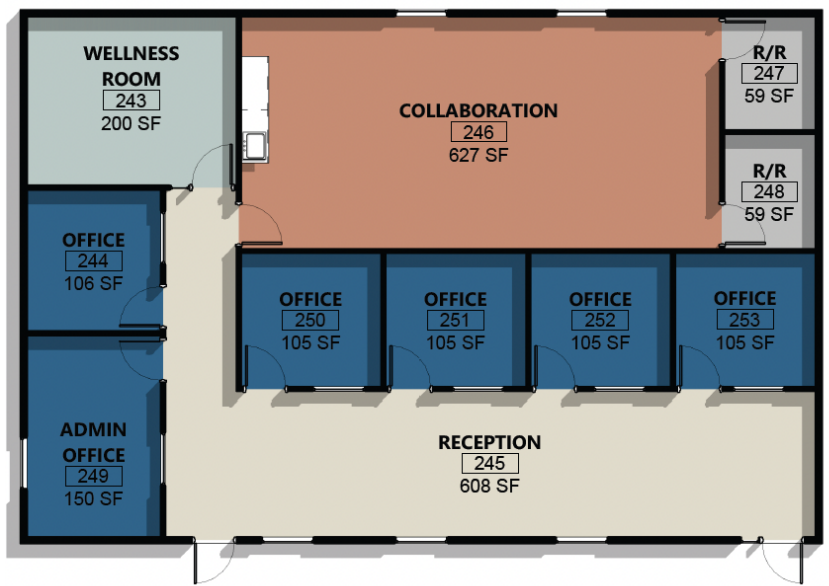
LAYOUT 2



LAYOUT 3



LAYOUT 4



Estimated Costs

| | LAYOUT 1 | LAYOUT 2 | LAYOUT 3 | LAYOUT 4 | | | | |
|--|---|-----------|---|-------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| Wellness Center Construction Costs (Estimated) | Facility Design #1 (40' x 24' or 960 SF) | | Facility Design #2 (40' x 36' or 1,440 SF) | | Facility Design #3 (40' x 48' or 1,920 SF) | | Facility Design #4 (40' x 60' or 2,400 SF) | |
| | Renovated Classroom Light (Modernization Light) | \$159,869 | Renovated Classroom Light (Modernization Light) | \$239,803 | Renovated Classroom Light (Modernization Light) | \$319,738 | Renovated Classroom Light (Modernization Light) | \$399,672 |
| | Renovated Classroom (Modernization) | \$380,640 | Renovated Classroom (Modernization) | \$570,960 | Renovated Classroom (Modernization) | \$761,280 | Renovated Classroom (Modernization) | \$951,600 |
| | Portable (New Construction Modular) | \$609,024 | Portable (New Construction Modular) | \$913,536 | Portable (New Construction Modular) | \$1,218,048 | Portable (New Construction Modular) | \$1,522,560 |
| | New Facility (New Construction Custom) | \$898,310 | New Facility (New Construction Custom) | \$1,347,466 | New Facility (New Construction Custom) | \$1,796,621 | New Facility (New Construction Custom) | \$2,245,776 |
| Wellness Center Staffing/ Personnel Costs | <p>Wellness Navigator (\$80,000) Classified Position</p> <p>Wellness Clinician/Coordinator (\$150,000) Licensed Mental Health Clinician (LCSW, LMFT, LPCC)</p> <p>Community Agency Partner (MOU) Salud Para La Gente, Encompass, PVPSA, Other</p> | | <p>Wellness Navigator (\$80,000) Classified Position</p> <p>Wellness Counselor (\$120,000)</p> <p>Wellness Clinician/Coordinator (\$150,000) Licensed Mental Health Clinician (LCSW, LMFT, LPCC)</p> <p>Community Agency Partner (MOU) Salud Para La Gente, Encompass, PVPSA, Other</p> | | <p>Wellness Navigator (\$80,000) Classified Position</p> <p>Wellness Counselor (\$120,000)</p> <p>Wellness Clinician/Coordinator (\$150,000) Licensed Mental Health Clinician (LCSW, LMFT, LPCC)</p> <p>Community Agency Partner (MOU) Salud Para La Gente, Encompass, PVPSA, Other</p> | | <p>Wellness Navigator (\$80,000) Classified Position</p> <p>Wellness Counselor (\$120,000)</p> <p>Wellness Clinician/Coordinator (\$150,000) Licensed Mental Health Clinician (LCSW, LMFT, LPCC)</p> <p>Community Agency Partner (MOU) Salud Para La Gente, Encompass, PVPSA, Other</p> <p>County Behavioral Health Clinician (MOU)</p> | |
| Wellness Center Materials and Supplies | <p>Interior Design of Wellness Center part of the facility cost</p> <p>Technology Costs for 3 personnel: \$7,500</p> <p>Materials and Supplies for Counseling (Individual/Group), Sensory Supplies, and other office needs: \$1,500</p> | | <p>Interior Design of Wellness Center part of the facility cost</p> <p>Technology Costs for 4 personnel: \$10,000</p> <p>Materials and Supplies for Counseling (Individual/Group), Sensory Supplies, and other office needs: \$1,500</p> | | <p>Interior Design of Wellness Center part of the facility cost</p> <p>Technology Costs for 5 personnel: \$12,500</p> <p>Materials and Supplies for Counseling (Individual/Group), Sensory Supplies, and other office needs: \$1,500</p> | | <p>Interior Design of Wellness Center part of the facility cost</p> <p>Technology Costs for 6 personnel: \$15,000</p> <p>Materials and Supplies for Counseling (Individual/Group), Sensory Supplies, and other office needs: \$1,500</p> | |
| Estimate of Total | \$398,869-\$1,127,310 + MOU | | \$601,303-\$1,708,966 + MOU | | \$683,738-\$2,160,621 + MOU | | \$766,172-\$2,612,276 + MOU | |

STAFFING & PARTNERSHIPS

School-based Wellness Centers are staffed with a Wellness Navigator and a Wellness Clinician/Coordinator. Wellness Center staff work in partnership with school personnel, county, and community-based agencies to coordinate care and provide support for students with immediate needs. While titles may vary across schools, two roles are essential: Wellness Navigator and the Wellness Clinician/Coordinator.

Staffing

Wellness Navigator: This role is responsible for supporting the day-to-day operations of the Wellness Center, screening students and linking them to mental health services and other programs. The Wellness Navigator acts as the liaison with representatives from agencies to coordinate care, collaborates with the multidisciplinary Wellness team to support students, and conducts presentations and outreach into the school community.

Wellness Clinician/Coordinator: This is a credentialed social worker, counselor, psychologist, or pre/licensed clinician who organizes and supports psychoeducation, student screening and assessments, individual and group counseling, coordination of care, and crisis response on campus. This position also supports Wellness Center operations and implementation, promotes school-wide wellness, and collects data for program monitoring and evaluation. It is recommended that there is one for every 500 students on a school campus.

Wellness Counselor: Another role in the Wellness Center is a wellness or social-emotional counselor. This role may have a credential in PPS or other qualifications needed to support students with emotional de-escalation, facilitation of social emotional groups, individual solution-focused brief counseling, and coordinating targeted behavioral interventions.

Interns: Registered interns with the State of California in multiple domains (Board of Behavioral Sciences or Board of Psychology), as well as credential tracked interns under the California Teacher Commission (School Counseling - PPS or School Psychologists) can provide essential clinical work for students within their designated scopes of practice, supporting the Wellness Clinician/Coordinator's role. Additionally, pre-Masters degree completed and/or post Bachelors degree awarded staff may be utilized for rehabilitation counseling and/or some of the work of the Wellness Navigator. Taken together, these up and coming professionals can add capacity at a less expensive rate, which may be crucial if insurance reimbursement is limited for any reason.

Partner Organizations

Building partnerships with community agencies is one of the best practices to sustain the Wellness Center as well as creating the bridges to connect students and families to a network of support across providers as needed. Collaborating with our community-based organizations, clinics, behavioral health, and local universities help to leverage community resources, supplement existing services and supports, and expand the school site's tiered mental health and social emotional interventions. The Wellness staff can coordinate with these community partners to bring additional expertise directly to the students at the school. By having integrated mental health systems in one Wellness Center, schools are also able to ensure unduplicated services for a student, create a space for communication and teaming, and truly have an open door to wellness for all students.

The vision for Santa Cruz County Schools is that existing LEA staff and resources can be calibrated with each of the partner types listed below: FQHCs, CBOs and CBH. Taken as four key drivers and suppliers of behavioral health services and care, each can be optimally utilized at each school site depending on the mix of acuity need, insurance type, geography and existing relationships. Given schools have built up their internal capacity for providing social-emotional and behavioral support over the last several years, it is assumed they will remain a key element in the configuration of Wellness Centers, adding and coordinating, in a more centralized way, other partners to ensure robust and timely staffing between all options.

Common partners include:

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs): FQHCs are federally funded, non-profit organizations that provide primary care and other services to people in medically underserved areas. Their services must be available to all residents. Our FQHCs in Santa Cruz County are Salud Para La Gente and Santa Cruz Community Health, which serve the Pajaro Valley and the Central and Northern areas of Santa Cruz county respectively. The county also runs two locations as an FQHC, mirroring these geographic splits noted above, in its clinic services division of the Health Services Agency. School's Wellness Centers may be eligible to act as an extension of these entities as a satellite location, creating the opportunity for billing as a patient and hence leveraging their clinic's behavioral health staff.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs): In this context, CBOs are non-profit agencies in the local community that offer services in the realm of behavioral health as well as essential family support such as parenting classes, food distribution, rental assistance, immigration services and more. Personnel providing mental health directly can often be co-located and leveraged for Wellness Center locations as part of overall staffing. Remaining services can be by referral, appointment or on designated days and times at the school-based centers.

County Behavioral Health (CBH): As part of the Health Services Agency (HSA) overseen by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, CBH is a division of HSA that includes Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS) as well as two departments that are the designated mental health agency chartered to serve moderate to severe clients who are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits; one for youth and one for adults. The youth department is known as Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services. They are part of the County Mental Health Plan (MHP) and provide this "specialty mental health services (SMHS)" through many entry points, known as gateways (which include Probation, Child Welfare, Schools and the ACCESS Team). Partnering with CBH in Wellness Centers adds the highest acuity capacity expertise available for school aged youth and can be partially funded through Medi-Cal reimbursements for services those staff can claim for care.

Student Voice

As the primary users of school-based Wellness Centers, student voice is essential.

Schools are encouraged to establish a local student group to help inform planning and implementation of school wellness services and the design of the facility.

Students voice strengthens school-based Wellness Centers by:

- Advising on operations and access to wellness center, services to offer, and cultural responsiveness to those services
- Assisting with marketing and communication efforts to reach all students
- Providing feedback on their Wellness Center experience
- Advocating for Wellness Center and its services with administrators and other organizations to sustain

At the county level, the Santa Cruz COE has partnered with Monarch Services to establish a Youth Mental Health Leadership Council. This group consists of a diverse group of representatives from Districts across the county and will have regular input and engagement with the progress of implementing this roadmap and, subsequently, evaluating the effectiveness of Wellness Centers. This countywide group will work in conjunction with each school-based youth mental-health leadership group.

SYSTEMS

Wellness Center systems, procedures, and operations lead to the effectiveness of services provided, the opportunity to serve more students, and the overall increased wellness of the school community. To ensure communication and collaboration with school staff, a referral process would be in place to identify students who may need support, while the mental health screening process helps to determine what services the students may need aligned with the tiered interventions on the continuum of care. Because the school-based Wellness Center is on campus, students can get immediate support and seek help without a staff or family member to request assistance on their behalf. Gathered data can support the Wellness Center in identifying behavioral and/or mental health trends and creating evidence-based early interventions to support these student needs before they require intensive crisis intervention. Santa Cruz COE will provide professional learning in partnership with schools in order to build these systems, operations, and knowledge to integrate existing systems across schools and community partners so there is an open door to wellness.

Screening and Referrals

To ensure students are receiving the services they need, Wellness Center staff utilize evidence-based screening and assessment tools. This data-driven approach informs the level of care students receive, the specific interventions that have contextual fit, treatment planning, possible linkages to community resources, and overall program evaluation.

When a student enters the Wellness Center, the Wellness Coordinator would ask for the student to check in using a sign-in tool for attendance and safety purposes. This staff member would then help support screening students with an identified evidence-based tool. This may include the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) or Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), among other tools to help the Wellness Center team learn of what might be the best support for the student in the continuum of care. Other than self-referring to the Wellness Center, students may be referred to the Wellness Center team by staff and family members using a request for assistance process.

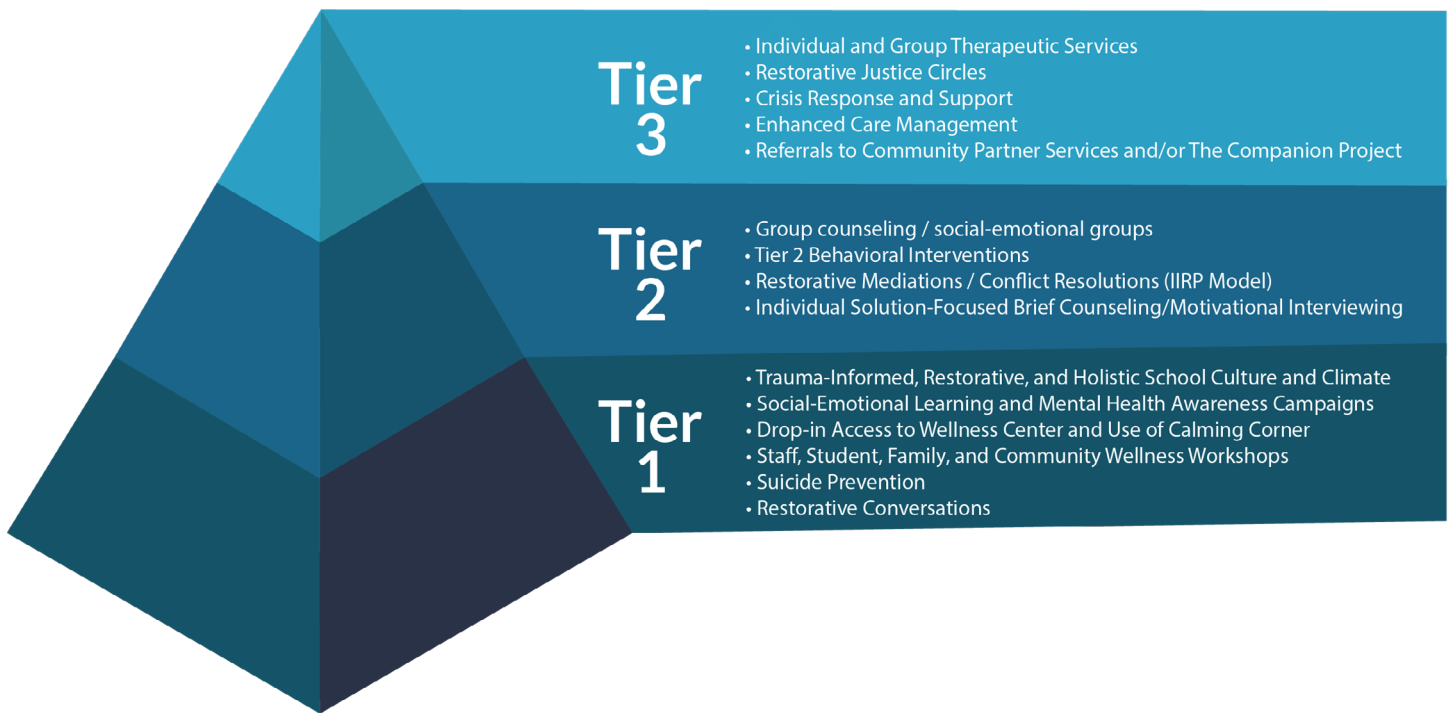
The Wellness Center team is a critical piece of this process. The Wellness Center team includes the key school-employed roles, community providers and partners, and meets regularly to review the referrals, coordinate to reduce barriers to care, and decrease duplication of services. More broadly, this team will also review broader mental health and wellness program goals, school-wide needs assessments, and operations of the Wellness Center. This team may be integrated into other teams that already exist such as MTSS Tiered Teams, Wellness teams, PBIS teams, COST teams, etc.

Services

Wellness Centers centralize a continuum of mental, social-emotional, and behavioral health services for students. These include mental health screening, intervention, counseling, crisis intervention, navigation to other avenues of mental health support, among other services. Wellness Centers work within the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support model to support students at all three tiers. Actual services will reflect the needs of the school and District community and linkages to community resources.

Alignment with MTSS / Continuum of Support

All three tiers of support are important when considering what the school-based Wellness Center will offer. Focusing on school-wide prevention and targeted interventions are just as important as thinking about individual, one-on-one interventions. Prevention and early intervention help to mitigate the need for more intensive support. This continuum also supports the efforts to destigmatize mental health and engrain the wellness center as an essential part of the school culture.



Professional Learning

Santa Cruz COE will provide professional learning for the District and school to support their Wellness Center initiative and sustainability of these efforts. This includes:

- Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment
- Wellness Center Operations, Systems, and Staffing
- Wellness Center Data Protocols Aligned with LCAP Goal Metrics
- Funding and Sustainability
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

Santa Cruz COE, along with our partners, can also offer professional learning opportunities around issues related to mental health and social emotional wellness for school staff. Training is based on current staff and student needs. These can include:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)
- Restorative Justice
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Integrated Systems Framework (PBIS and Mental Health)
- Integrated Transformative Social Emotional Learning
- Other offerings indicated by need

FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

Santa Cruz COE will partner with each District to develop, create, and implement a sustainability plan that braids funding to sustain the Wellness Center. This could include Medi-Cal billing and commercial billing in 2024, additional grants and/or identifying school or District funding for on-going implementation. Districts are encouraged to pursue multiple strategies to support their students and their Wellness Center with a combination of one-time funds including grants, ongoing funds, in-kind donations or contributions, and billing reimbursement for services.

One-time Funds (District)

California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) Planning and Implementation Grants

Nearly \$3 billion in funding has been secured for planning, implementing and coordinating Community Schools in California. If districts meet minimum qualifications, largely having to do with their student populations and/or areas of growth based on outcome measures as compared to state averages, they may apply for \$200K/yr for two years for planning, \$500K/yr for five years for implementation or \$100K/yr for up to four years (The last category starting in the 2024-25 school year). The grants must follow the four pillars of community schools (integrated student support, family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities). Wellness Centers and mental health care can be woven into these pillars and hence partially fund their expense.

School-linked Partnership and Capacity Grants

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) “will provide direct School-linked Partnership and Capacity Grants to support new services to individuals 25 years of age and younger from schools, providers in school, school-affiliated community-based organizations (CBOs), or school-based health centers. By improving capacity, partnerships, and infrastructure, DHCS will continue to expand access to school-based services for students. The grants will be designed to support the implementation of the statewide all-payer fee schedule in 2024.”¹ The hope is that LEAs or COEs, along with CBOs, counties and cities, can apply for these dollars (550M total in CA) to support the burgeoning infrastructure and coordination needs of a more robust and braided revenue stream for behavioral health services in schools.

Fundraising: Capital Campaign

For LEAs that may not have robust adequate funding through the many strands outlined in this section, it may be very helpful to create a one-time infrastructure and capital campaign. The Santa Cruz COE is willing to support such efforts, but believe they are best seated in the school geography and population of the intended Wellness Center. Ideally multiple revenue sources can be shown as “secured,” leaving a final gap to be filled by this investment from the key stakeholders of a given school or district.

Ongoing Funds (District)

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

Enacted nearly a decade ago, this funding source is the vehicle for much of a school’s revenue, and is the most familiar source for education leaders. It is distributed to school districts as base, supplemental and concentration grants related to their enrollment percentages of students who are low income, in foster care, English Learners and/or experiencing homelessness. Spending is outlined in Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) tied to district goals and state priority areas. These funds, aligned with noted goals and priorities, and connected ultimately to learning improvement and outcomes, can be used to cover expenses not directly tied to billing opportunities. Roles such as

the Wellness Navigator or initial start up costs might be budgeted here, keeping the clinicians and credentialed staff in the more restrictive and reimbursable funding sources.

Title I, Title IV, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Similar to the LCFF funding described above, the ESSA funding streams are largely based on the percentage of low-income students in a district. These dollars, however, come from the federal government, passing through the state on the way to the district. Further aligned with LCFF, these funds have a general flexibility to cover costs associated with broad goals of advancing school achievement and creating safe and healthy school climates. Ideally they are allocated for key aspects of Wellness Center costs that are not able to be covered by more restrictive funding, grants or reimbursable activities. They could also close a gap if services are provided to non-insured students.

Local Education Agency - Billing Option Program (LEA BOP)

This program is the most common existing manner in which LEAs can claim reimbursement directly for services provided to Medi-Cal eligible students for common supports offered by school staff, especially in the special education setting (which it was restricted to prior to April 2020). These can include mental health related activities like counseling, screenings and assessments done by qualified practitioners (typically credentialed school psychologists, licensed or license track clinicians). There are several technical details in the claiming process, but in general an LEA can seek 50% of their upfront costs for the services indicated, which can clearly offset the overall staffing budget.

School-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (SMAA)

This program reimburses school districts for the federal share (50%) of certain costs for administering the Medi-Cal program. These activities can include: Outreach and Referral; Facilitating the Medi-Cal Application; Arranging Non-Emergency/Non-Medical Transportation; Program Planning and Policy Development; and MAA Claims Coordination. These dollars are captured by having staff fill out random moment time surveys (RMTS) and pooling these results in a Local Educational Consortia (LEC), of which the Santa Cruz COE is one of eleven throughout California. These dollars can be used to support some minor costs a Wellness Center may incur in a flexible manner.

Educationally-Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS)

Restricted funding administered by SELPAs through the CDE and used only for educationally related mental health services for students with IEPs or 504 Plans who demonstrate behavioral issues that impact their ability to learn. In schools, this might look like hiring mental health professionals who provide these services, or a contract with community mental health and/or county behavioral health to provide these services. Recent law changes allow for some expanded use of these dollars for a broader set of students.

Santa Cruz COE Support

One-time funds

Mental Health School Services Act (MHSSA)

Santa Cruz COE, under the partnership of County Behavioral Health, received a 4 year grant to support a variety of efforts to improve student behavioral health. Aside from a team of navigation and itinerant counseling staff, support for local non-profits, training and symposia funding, as well as potential small sub-grants for Wellness Center costs are included in the plan. The aforementioned staff may also be leveraged for the intern or pre-licensed capacity during the life of the grant.

Ongoing funds

Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)

MHSA PEI is a category of funding administered by the County Behavioral Health Departments. It is intended to emphasize strategies to reduce negative outcomes that may result from untreated mental illness. In schools, this might look like funding for Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs such as PBIS, and/or Wellness Center funding to work upstream in youth mental health care, screening, assessing and treating students before significant symptoms emerge. Perhaps partial funding for the Wellness Navigator or stand alone universal and targeted programming expenses might be provided.

Emerging and Transformative Opportunities

CalAIM and CYBHI

AB 133, which established CalAIM and the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), offers a bold transformation of Medi-Cal Services and mental health care. This legislation helps to cultivate a culture of equity in health care by creating the infrastructure to expand services under Medi-Cal, offering a number of changes to ease and increase access to Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Care Services and generate competitive grants (some noted above) to assist entities in preparing for and delivering these changes.

Commercial Insurance Billing

Pursuant to Health and Safety Code 1374.722 and Insurance Code 10144.53, starting on, or after, January 2024, commercial insurance plans will be required to reimburse schools for designated behavioral health services on a fee for service schedule and will only be able to deny claims from a very limited rubric. Santa Cruz COE will help school-based Wellness Centers to develop an infrastructure, referral pathway, and service model so that they are positioned to take advantage of this opportunity.

Strategic partnerships

Health Care and Private Philanthropy

The Santa Cruz COE will work with local health providers to solicit funding and support. Many of the insurance and health care entities have foundation and granting arms which aim to support their communities and patients. Locally these might include: Anthem Blue Cross, Sutter, PAMF, Kaiser and Common Spirit (Dignity Health), among others. Similarly, there are local individuals, foundations and even private businesses that may be interested in supporting this important work in the Santa Cruz Community/County. The Santa Cruz COE is committed to pursuing all such options and engaging in dialogue with all leads in this arena.

Sustainability

To sustain the operations of the Wellness Center, we will build and strengthen partnerships with our other organizations and agencies as funding streams often encourage or require these partnerships to leverage additional funding. These partners may include our Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (MCP) - locally known as The Central Coast Alliance for Health (CCAHA), County Behavioral Health (CBH), local non-profit behavioral health providers (CBOs), local community health centers or Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

Santa Cruz COE recently obtained a grant, known as the School Health Demonstration Project, with allocated funding from the CDE to become a county-wide pilot in the state to learn and share technical assistance for sustainable and braided funding. We will be sharing these tools and strategies throughout a two year process beginning January 2023.

Even more universal and exciting is AB 133, which established CalAIM and the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI). This legislation helps to cultivate a culture of equity in health care by creating the infrastructure to expand services under Medi-Cal, offering a number of changes to ease and increase access to Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Care Services and generate competitive grants to assist entities in preparing for and delivering these changes.

Additionally, pursuant to Health and Safety Code 1374.722 and Insurance Code 10144.53, starting on, or after, January 2024, commercial insurance plans will be required to reimburse schools for designated behavioral health services on a fee for service schedule and will only be able to deny claims from a very limited rubric. Santa Cruz COE will help school-based Wellness Centers to develop an infrastructure, referral pathway, and service model so that they are positioned to take advantage of this opportunity.

NEXT STEPS

The simplified Roadmap below outlines the next steps towards making your Wellness Center a reality. Santa Cruz COE is here to support you on the journey and will provide guidance, coaching, and a technical manual to schools and Districts inspired to take the next step.

