

*Mental Health and Schools Together - Seacoast New Hampshire Abstract*

The Rochester, New Hampshire School District (SAU #54)

Children who live in Rochester are some of NH's most vulnerable, experiencing among the poorest life outcomes anywhere in the state. These children are exposed to a variety of risk factors that can have a profound negative impact on child development, mental health (MH) and school achievement including an increased likelihood of having a mental illness, dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse. In response to these needs, the *Mental Health and Schools Together-Seacoast NH* (MAST-SC NH) project is being designed to enhance and expand the emerging system of care and education in the Seacoast region of NH by providing children and their families from Rochester with improved access to educational mental health (MH), juvenile justice (JJ) and other services and supports that result in improved quality of life outcomes. MAST-SC NH will achieve this goal through sustainable systems enhancements and cross-partner activities that increase the training, coaching, coordination, and evaluation capacity of school, MH, and other community partners and family members to provide evidence-based, culturally competent and linguistically appropriate school and community-based primary, secondary and tertiary prevention services.

As a result of MAST-SC NH, children with MH needs will have increased access to school personnel and family members with knowledge and skills regarding (a) the characteristics of mental illnesses and their effects on learning, (b) early screening systems and risk indicators that are predictive of MH needs, and (c) the evidence based practices of de-escalation techniques, function-based support, and Wraparound. School personnel and family members will also be able to refer children with MH needs to school and community-based MH services including crisis intervention and Wraparound. Furthermore, MAST-SC NH will lead to (a) the creation of a trained student leadership team at the middle school that can collect and analyze data and develop action plans in collaboration with the primary prevention team that will improve school climate, (b) the development of school-facilitated referral and communication protocols that link schools with MH services and supports, (c) the creation of a crisis de-escalation team in each school that uses Life Space Crisis Intervention techniques and can effectively respond to escalating student behavior ,decreasing the likelihood that school conflict will result in a crisis, and (d) Wraparound supports for children and families in need.