

Needs Assessment Interview Questions – SAMPLE

Questions for Principals or Other Administrators:

1. What are the most pressing behavioral health needs (i.e., anger outbursts, eloping, anxiety, withdrawal) facing students in the school? How are those needs being addressed?
2. I have noted that your school provides behavioral health services. What do you see as the primary strengths of these services across the three tiers? What do you see as needing improvement?
3. How are students referred for services? To what extent are behavioral and referral procedures followed by the wider school community?
4. Does your school conduct screenings to help identify students who need support?
5. How does the school involve families in the behavioral health supports and services it offers?
6. In what ways do students engage with creating a positive school community? What additional resources or opportunities could increase student engagement?
7. In what ways do students' families engage with creating a positive school community? What additional resources or opportunities could increase parent engagement?
8. What is the protocol for dealing with behavioral health emergencies (i.e., suicidal or homicidal ideation)? What are your protocols for dealing with suicidality—prevention, intervention, and postvention?
9. How does the school assess the effectiveness of its behavioral health services?
10. How do district staff help to support school-based programs?
11. Does your school partner with other schools in the district to share resources or ideas? If so, how?
12. Are practices across all three tiers trauma-informed? If so, how?
 - a. Does your school have a directory of school- and community-based resources available to support student behavioral health? How is this resource map shared with staff and members of the school community?
 - b. What connections have been built with providers in the community? Who oversees maintaining this relationship? How are new connections sought?
13. How are these and other mental health service providers integrated into the school community?
14. If your school was allotted another \$50,000 each year, what would you invest in? How much does the school currently invest in behavioral health supports? Funding streams for support?
15. If you had to make one change in your school's current mental health practices, what would it be?

Questions for Professional School Counselors:

1. What services do you provide at your school? To whom do you report?
2. What are the most pressing/common behavioral health needs facing students in the school/district? How are those needs being addressed?
3. What are the specific challenges or needs of the various subpopulations on your campus, students from low socioeconomic status, students who are undocumented, or students who are English learners?
4. Who provides therapy for students? How are they trained? How does their training reflect the needs of the diverse student population that they serve?
5. Are there any therapeutic groups that would be particularly helpful that aren't available at this time? If so, which ones?
6. Are practices across Tiers 1, 2, and 3 trauma-informed? If so, how?
7. Do you partner with other mental health service providers? How are these and other mental health service providers integrated into the school community?

8. In what ways do students engage with creating a positive school community? Do they form groups or activities? If so, which ones? How do they give feedback about their own school? What additional resources or opportunities could increase student engagement?
9. How do you, as a counselor, reach out to parents? Are you able to share family information with relevant school staff?
10. What types of behavioral health trainings and workshops do you provide to families and staff?
11. How does the school ensure that behavioral health supports and services are culturally responsive and aligned with student and family priorities?
12. How can the school become a place that is even more inclusive, supportive, and empowering for all students?

Potential additional questions:

1. Are services integrated and coordinated across the three tiers? If so, how? What connections have been built with providers in the community? How are they sustained and by whom? How are new connections sought?
2. How are behavioral health services funded? Has new funding been sought?
3. How does the school assess the effectiveness of its behavioral health services?

Questions for Teachers:

1. What are the most pressing/common behavioral health needs facing students in the school/district? How are those needs being addressed?
2. What are the specific challenges or needs of students from all subpopulations, students from low socioeconomic status, students who are undocumented, or students who are English learners?
3. What are some of the strengths you see most often from students in your school/district?
4. How does your school promote a positive school climate?
5. When you have a student with behavioral or mental health concerns, what do you do?
6. What do you know about trauma and trauma-informed care? What trainings have you had on trauma and trauma-informed care?
7. In what ways do students engage in creating a positive school community? Do they form groups or activities? How do they give feedback about their own school? What additional resources or opportunities could increase student engagement?
8. How do you reach out to parents? How are they included in the student's education? Is that method something common across the school community, or does it differ between teachers, and if so, how?
9. To what extent is the cultural or ethnic backgrounds of students reflected in the curriculum taught at your school?
10. How are mental health service providers integrated into the school community?
11. What is the biggest change that you think your school could make to improve the mental health of your students?

Questions for Interventionists (Response to Intervention (RtI) Teachers, etc.):

1. What are the most pressing/common behavioral health needs facing students in the school/district? How are those needs being addressed?
2. I have noted that your school provides _____ services. What do you see as the primary strengths of those services across the three tiers? What do you see as needing improvement?

3. How are students referred for needed services? How do staff learn about services and the referral process? How do students and families learn about existing behavioral health services?
4. Are services integrated and coordinated across the three tiers? If so, how? Is there a system in place to follow up on referrals? How is it working?
5. To what extent are the policies and procedures understood/followed by the wider school community?
6. How does the school assess the effectiveness of its behavioral health services?
7. How does the district help to support school-based behavioral health programs in your school?

Potential additional questions:

1. Does your school partner with other schools in the district to share resources or ideas? If so, how?
2. What are the specific challenges or needs of students of color, students from low socioeconomic status, students who are undocumented, or students who are English learners? How are those addressed?
3. How do district staff help to support school-based programs?
4. What connections have been built with providers in the community? How are they sustained and by whom? How are they financed? How are new connections sought?
5. How does the school reach out to parents? What kinds of activities or gatherings do parents participate in? What could the school do more of or do differently to better involve the parent community?
6. Are practices across all three tiers trauma-informed? How?

Questions for Behavior Specialists:

1. What are the most pressing behavioral health needs facing students at the school? How are those needs being addressed?
2. Tell me about a typical day in your job. How do you spend your time?
3. How much of your job is focused on mental health as distinct from behavior? What do you see as the primary strengths of the services across the three tiers? What do you see as needing improvement?
4. How does the school ensure that behavioral health supports and services are culturally responsive and aligned with student and family priorities? What are the specific challenges or needs of all student subpopulations on your campus, students from low socioeconomic status, students who are undocumented, or students who are English learners?
5. In what ways do students engage with creating a positive school community? What additional resources or opportunities could increase student engagement?
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of your behavioral health services?
7. If you had to make one change in your school's current mental health practices, what would it be?
8. Are services integrated and coordinated across the three tiers? If so, how?
9. Are practices across all three tiers trauma-informed? How?
10. What other behavioral health services are available at the schools where you work? What do you see as the strengths and limitations of these services? What additional groups might be helpful for the student population?
11. How can the school become a place that is even more inclusive, supportive, and empowering for all students?

Questions for School Nurses:

1. What are the most pressing physical health needs related to mental and behavioral health at the school? How are those needs being addressed?
2. Tell me about a typical day in your job. How many students visit the nurse's office with physical health issues that may be connected to a possible mental or behavioral health issue?
3. How much of your job is focused on mental health crises?
4. How does the school ensure that mental and behavioral health supports are aligned with student and family priorities? What are the specific challenges or needs of students at your school?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of health services provided to students?
6. If you had to make one change in your school's current mental health practices, what would it be?
7. What other behavioral health services are available at the schools where you work? What do you see as the strengths and limitations of these services? What additional groups might be helpful for the student population?

Questions for Special Education Directors/Special Education Leaders at District-Level:

1. How do you see the role of Special Education as part of a district-wide mental health provision?
2. How many students does the district have with specific mental or behavioral health concerns (as opposed to academic challenges)? Is there data tracking this?
3. How many students from the following groups have been identified as needing Special Education services: students from low socio-economic status and/or students who are English language learners? How many have been identified as needing mental or behavioral health services as opposed to academic services?
4. Of the students referred mainly for mental health concerns, could any of these students be served instead through General Education counseling services?
5. How much time do you think your Special Education teachers spend on training regarding mental and behavioral health? On providing specific mental/behavioral health services?
6. Do schools generally want their students to receive Special Education services? Why or why not?
7. If your department was allotted another \$50,000 each year for mental health services, what would you invest in?

Questions for Special Education Team, Inclusive of Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSPs):

1. What are the most common mental health needs facing Special Education students in the district?
2. How many students in your caseload have specific mental or behavioral health concerns (as opposed to academic challenges)? What is the demographic background of your students?
3. How are students referred to Special Education services for mental health concerns at your schools? Is this the same as the General Education referral process?
4. How are staff and families informed about the referral process?
5. How do most Special Education teachers work with General Education teachers and families?
6. Are any kids in Special Education accessing General Education mental health resources, such as counseling?
7. Do schools want their students to receive Special Education services? If no, why not?
8. If your department was allotted another \$50,000 each year for mental health services, what would you invest in?
9. If you had to make one change in Special Education mental health practices, what would it be?

Questions for Providers from Outside Agencies:

1. Which schools do you work with, and in what capacity?
 - a. Please describe the services you provide.
 - b. What do you see as the primary strengths of these services? How do you measure their effectiveness? What do you see as needing improvement?
 - c. How do you ensure that these services meet the needs of students from different racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds?
2. What are the most pressing/common behavioral health needs you are aware of that students are experiencing in the school/district? How are those needs being addressed?
3. What are the specific challenges or needs of students from low socioeconomic status, students who are undocumented, or students who are English language learners?
4. What other behavioral health services are available at the schools where you work? What do you see as the strengths and limitations of these services? What additional groups might be helpful for the student population?
5. Are practices across all three tiers trauma-informed? How?
6. How does your organization reach out to families? Is information you receive from families shared with anyone at the school? Possible followup questions: Do other practitioners in the school have similar practices when it comes to connecting with parents and sharing information? Also, how do they reach out to staff and students? Is their approach aligned with how other providers on-site conduct outreach?
7. How does the school ensure that behavioral health supports and services are culturally responsive and aligned with student and family priorities?
8. As a service provider from an outside agency, how integrated do you feel into the school community? How has this been accomplished? How could it be improved? Is this similar for other service providers? How do they collaborate with other providers and school staff? Do they have the resources they need to be effective (for example, confidential space and opportunities to engage with teachers around client needs)?
9. If the school you work at could make one change in the way it provides student support services, what would it be? Why do you think this is most important?

Sample Focus Group Questions

Student Family Focus Group Questions:

1. What do you think are some of the main mental and behavioral health needs and concerns in the student population?
2. What are some of the ways the school is addressing these needs/concerns? What would you like to see more of?
3. How connected do you feel to the school? Does the school reach out to you?
4. Does the school communicate with you in a language that you are comfortable with?
5. What kinds of activities or gatherings do parents participate in?
6. How do you feel like your family's cultural background is (or is not) recognized and appreciated by the school?
7. What does the school do well to create a positive environment for your student? What could it do better?
8. Do you feel like the school could help out families if they were experiencing challenges in their lives (for example, needing help finding food or shelter, or getting insurance for their children)?
9. What could the school do more of or do differently to better involve the parent community?

Secondary School Student Focus Group Questions:

1. In what ways are you a leader at your school?
2. What do you do if one of your friends is having a problem, like feeling sad or having a lot of issues at home? What about if they are talking about suicide, either in person or on social media? What about if they are talking about bringing a weapon to school?
3. Are there adults at school who you talk to when you are upset about something or have a problem? Who? How easy is it to talk to them? Why do you think that is so?
4. (If not already addressed) Do you know if there are mental health counselors available at school to talk to? How would you talk to them if you needed to?
5. What happens at your school when two or more students have a conflict?
6. What happens when students get in trouble at your school?
7. How does your school teach you about things like being a good friend, or staying calm, or standing up for yourself?
8. Do you feel like your parents and the adults at school know each other? Why do you think that?
9. Do you feel accepted and appreciated for who you are at school, including how you look, what language you speak, and where you live?
10. Is there anything that you wish your school would do to help you feel safer and more comfortable? Are there any additional services or supports that you think would be helpful?
11. Does your school have an anonymous tip line? If so, have you or anyone you know used it? If no, why not? If yes, what happened?
12. What actions would you recommend for improving current services and supports?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

Elementary School Student Focus Group Questions:

1. What are some of your favorite things about your school?
2. What do adults do at the school that make you feel safe and happy?
3. What happens when you make a mistake or get in trouble at school?
4. What do adults do when you have a problem with another student?
5. Do you feel like your parents and the adults at school know each other? Why do you think that?
6. Do you know if there are counselors available at school to talk to? How would you talk to them if you needed to?
7. Do you know who to go to if you're feeling sad or scared? If yes, who?
8. Do you feel accepted and appreciated for who you are at school, including how you look, what language you speak, and where you live?
9. Is there anything that the school could do to help you feel safer and more comfortable?