

Project A.W.A.R.E. (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Texas

is an initiative in collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) intended to strengthen community and school-based supports for the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of students.

MISSION and VISION

At Project A.W.A.R.E., our **mission** is to develop and sustain an integrated, multi-tiered system of supports that promotes mental health, wellness, and advances the resilience of students in the family, education, and community settings.

Our **vision** is to establish a comprehensive school mental health system that utilizes both school and community-based supports, ensuring that all students have access to positive, safe, and supportive school environments that foster resiliency and academic success.

our GOALS

Increase and improve access to culturally and developmentally appropriate school- and community-based mental health services.

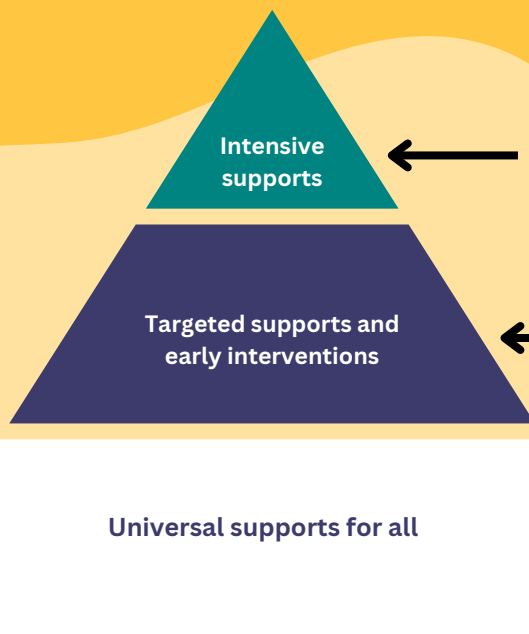
Increase awareness and identification of mental health issues among all adults working with young people and promote positive mental health for students, families, school staff, and the community.

Help students develop skills that will promote resilience, self-regulation and pro-social behaviors; avert development of mental and behavioral health disorders; and prevent youth violence.

Develop infrastructure and capacity to sustain access to mental health promotion and evidence-based practices for school and community-based services.



A.W.A.R.E. Texas uses a comprehensive multi-tiered system of mental health and wellness supports (MTSS) as a framework for cross-system collaboration to ensure Texas youth have access to the wide range of interventions associated with complete mental health and wellness.



Best Practice Examples:

- Individual mental health counseling by a mental health specialist
- Case management & coordination with providers and family
- Safety planning

- Connections to support services at school & in community
- Small group skill-building
- Referrals & follow up plans

- Grief and Trauma informed campus/district/staff
- Mental health literacy, promotion, and prevention
- Positive, safe, and supportive school climate

There are 3 dedicated clinicians in each A.W.A.R.E. LEA. Each LEA has 1 community project manager (CPM) and 2 mental and behavioral health specialists (MHBHS). Each A.W.A.R.E. staff is in place to build capacity at the district and campus level to provide mental and behavioral health services to students.



Manor ISD
 CPM: Ayanna Edwards, LMSW
 MHBH Specialist: Emily Santoyo, LPC
 MHBH Specialist: Victoria Bailey, LPC



San Marcos CISD
 CPM: Jennifer Parker, LPC-S
 MHBH Specialist: Micaela Hernandez, LMSW
 MHBH Specialist: Diana Escamelia, LPC LSSP



Elgin ISD
 CPM: Thelma Bell-Punchard, LPC LCDC ASOTP
 MHBH Specialist: Nykki Arowoshala, LPC
 MHBH Specialist: Ane Johnson, LPC-A



Below is an example of the role A.W.A.R.E. staff play in accomplishing A.W.A.R.E. & LEA goals.

Community Project Manager (CPM)

- Provide leadership & coaching for LEA to deliver school mental health activities
- Supervise A.W.A.R.E. mental health and behavioral health specialist
- Establish and maintain strong partnerships with the Local Mental Health Authority and other community partners

Both

- Refining referral pathways for students
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to provide mental health services
- Provide training and engagement opportunities to staff, students, and the rest of the school community.
- Serve on campus or district level teams related to mental health and student supports
- Provide coordinated, direct counseling/interventions for students identified as needing Tier 2 or 3 school mental health services

Mental Health & Behavioral Health specialist (MHBHS)

- Collaborate with campus leadership and staff to increase early identification, intervention, and prevention efforts
- Support implementation of Tier 1 universal interventions
- Provide meaningful engagement opportunities for students and families

Project A.W.A.R.E. Expansion Consortium State Team

The state team is responsible for providing consultation and technical assistance that supports the overall school mental health infrastructure of A.W.A.R.E. districts and the state of Texas.



Ashton Millet MPP
State Coordinator
TEA

- Project coordination
- Policy consultation
- Technical assistance



Laura Hernandez-Gold
LCSW-S
State Co-Coordinator
Texas HHSC

- Project coordination
- Community mental health partner collaboration
- Suicide prevention, postvention, & intervention technical assistance



Molly Sanders MA
Lead Evaluator
UT-Austin's TIEMH

- Data analysis & reporting
- Program evaluation
- Continuous quality improvement



Willa Rosen LCSW LCDC
AWARE Coach
ESC 13

- Technical assistance
- Coaching
- Training



Dr. Paula Freeman PhD
AWARE Coach
ESC 13

- Technical assistance
- Coaching
- Training



Sydney Pauling MA
Evaluator
UT-TIEMH

- Data analysis & reporting
- Program evaluation
- Continuous quality improvement



Dr. Molly Lopez PhD
Director
UT-TIEMH

- Program evaluation
- Resource development
- Continuous quality improvement



Julie Wayman MSW
Project Director
TEA

- Grant oversight
- Statewide development
- Agency collaboration



Tammy Gendke MA
Mental Health Program
Coordinator
TEA

- Implementation support
- Building partnerships
- Statewide development



Jerlene Gibbs CSC
Program Specialist
TEA

- Technical assistance
- Implementation support
- Resource development

A.W.A.R.E. Texas State Management Partners

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC)

Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS)

Department of Juvenile Justice (TJJD)

South Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

UT-Austin Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH)

Unified Services for All Children Advisory Council (USAC)

A.W.A.R.E. Texas Regional & Local Partners

Manor Independent School District

Elgin Independent School District

San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District

Education Service Center Region 13

Integral Care

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services

Hill Country Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Centers

What does it mean to be a part of Project A.W.A.R.E. TEXAS?

Opportunity to influence the: development of state school mental health policies, creation of state resources, and dissemination of best practices to other LEAs across Texas through data sharing, providing feedback, and piloting best practices.

Funding to support the school mental health infrastructure of your A.W.A.R.E. district and A.W.A.R.E. targeted campuses.

Training and technical assistance on school mental health implementation including consultation on youth violence prevention and early mental health identification and intervention.

On-demand access to content experts in trauma & grief-informed care, suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, and other school mental health-related topics.

Available Statewide Resources developed through Project A.W.A.R.E. Texas

[Schoolmentalhealthtx.org](https://www.schoolmentalhealthtx.org)

This website provides access to resources and tools developed by A.W.A.R.E. partners to strengthen school mental health systems across the state.



[School Mental Health Best Practices & Programs Repository](#)

This repository is made up of research-based best practices and best-practice based programs for advancing school mental health and meeting the compliance requirements of the Texas Education Code §38.351.



[Texas School Mental Health Practice Guide & Toolkit](#)

The practice guide and toolkit were designed to provide information, resources, and tools to LEAs to plan and provide a comprehensive school mental health system.



[Texas School Mental Health Resource Database](#)

This database was developed through collaboration with the TEA and each of the 20 ESC regions. The resources in the database allow users to access identified resources based on location and resource type.



A.W.A.R.E. Texas Gulf Coast Data Snapshot

The original A.W.A.R.E. Texas grant was awarded to Texas from 2018 to 2023 in an effort to support the mental health and wellness of students and families impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The data below shows a snapshot of the impact A.W.A.R.E. had across 5 LEAs in the Texas Gulf Coast region.

8,435

Number of students served through a Multi-Tiered System of Support in 5 Local Education Agencies



100%

Percentage of AWARE districts that retained a Mental and Behavioral Health Specialist (MHBHS) position post A.W.A.R.E. grant



87%

Percentage of students who received tier 2 and 3 services following referral



Stakeholder Reviews

“As a single mom, having extra cost for a provider is hard. So having a provider on campus is wonderful.” -Parent

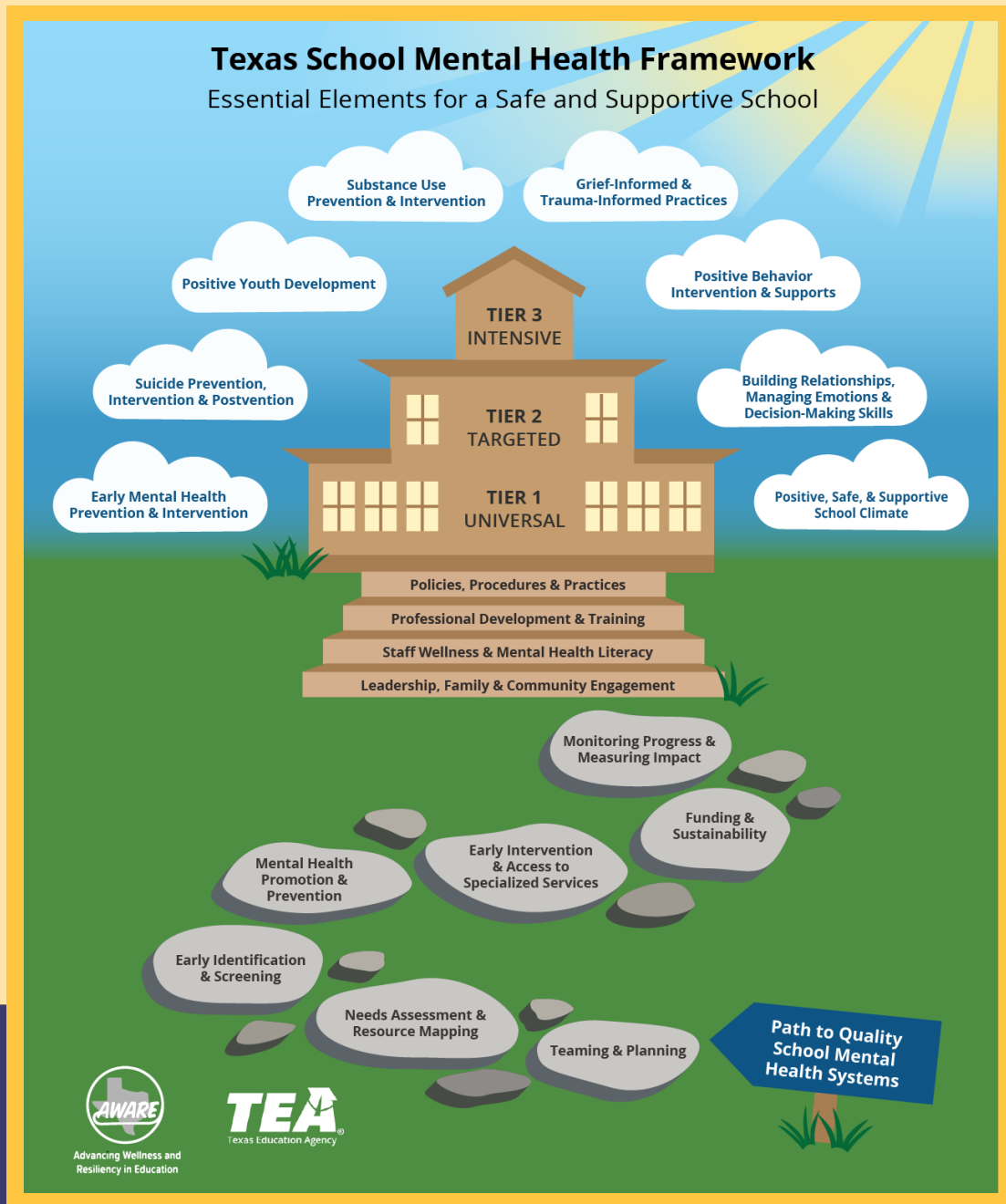
“I have noticed my son is more calm.” -Parent

“Having mental health specialist in house is invaluable for students and staff to receive the intervention they need.” - Campus Administrator

“A referral process for students with mental health issues that gets them the help they need [has been the most impactful change because of A.W.A.R.E.]” - Campus Administrator

Texas School Mental Health Framework

Essential Elements for a Safe and Supportive School



The Texas School Mental Health Framework provides a graphic look at the essential components of a comprehensive school mental health system.



The schoolhouse represents the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that outlines the structure of the school mental health system. Drawing from a public health approach, the MTSS identifies that our services and supports are planned for three tiers: Tier 1 to provide universal supports to all students, Tier 2 to intervene early and address emerging mental health concerns, Tier 3 to provide intensive or specialized services to support students with a mental health disorder. The MTSS is strengthened by the factors represented on the steps to the school.



On the stone pathway, we find the domains of quality for our school mental health system. Within each domain, districts and schools can explore best practices for effective school mental health systems, benchmark their local practices to national quality standards, and plan for and prioritize improvements.



The components of a comprehensive school mental health system are presented in the clouds above the schoolhouse. The components, identified in TEC §38.351, represent the areas in which Local Education Agencies must develop practices, procedures, and/or professional development opportunities. Specific requirements are outlined in the School Mental Health Toolkit. Resources, best practices, and training for these components are available on the TEA Best Practice List.