Mental Health Best Practices and Programs List Competencies

Purpose of Competencies

The competencies outlined within this document serve as a foundational guide for selecting best-practices and research-based programs that meet the requirements of TEC §38.351, TEC §38.036, TEC §21.451, and TEC §21.4515. School systems may use these competencies when evaluating programs or practices not currently on the list established by TEC §38.351, ensuring that locally selected approaches are aligned with statutory requirements. By addressing multiple areas of school mental health, these competencies support a comprehensive and integrated implementation strategy.

The list of best-practice-based programs and research-based practices are not exhaustive, and approaches for fulfilling the competencies are not limited to the examples provided below. The competencies and examples below may be considered when establishing local training and implementation procedures based upon the recommendations of the SBEC Clearinghouse.

Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention

Competency	Examples of Fulfilling Competency
Addresses suicide prevention strategies for students at risk of attempting suicide: including students who may be the victims of bullying, engage in bullying, or students displaying a possible need for early mental health or substance abuse intervention.	- Promoting protective factors that contribute to suicide prevention. - Understanding factors that increase the risk of suicide. - Recognizing the correlation between bullying and suicide.
Addresses suicide intervention strategies for students identified as at risk of suicide or displaying early warning signs for the need of early mental health or substance use interventions.	- Learning to identify early warning signs and strategies for intervening when a student is at risk for suicide. - Promoting the skills needed to follow local policies and procedures for suicide prevention (e.g., referrals and resources).
Addresses suicide postvention strategies to promote the healing necessary for those affected by a death by suicide.	- Improving student connectedness with the school community. - Utilizing strategies to promote positive interactions among students and adults. - Stressing the importance of school procedures for addressing a loss to suicide.
Addresses strategies to assist students in returning to school following treatment of a mental health concern or suicide attempt.	- Holding a supportive and safe transition meeting with the students and their families. - Utilizing evidence-based safety planning interventions. - Identifying appropriate coping strategies for both at school and at home.

Trauma and Grief Informed Practices

Competency	Examples of Fulfilling Competency
Addresses how to recognize the effects of trauma and grief on students' learning and behavior.	• Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the prevalence of trauma. • Identifying the signs of students impacted by trauma and grief.
Addresses evidence-based, trauma and grief-informed care practices that support the academic success of students affected by trauma and grief.	• Utilizing evidence-based classroom and campus strategies that mitigate the impacts of grief and trauma on students. • Implementing practices that create safe and supportive learning environments.
Addresses how to respond to students impacted by trauma and grief.	• Understanding available counseling options and resources for students listed in the local trauma-informed care policy. • Promoting protective factors of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) to mitigate the negative impacts of ACEs.
Addresses staff awareness of trauma and grief-informed care.	• Understanding data that describes the impacts of trauma and grief on students. • Promoting trauma and grief-informed practices that can be used by school staff.

Positive Youth Development

Competency	Examples of Fulfilling Competency
Addresses strategies for preventing problem behaviors	• Increasing school connectedness and supportive school climates. • Promoting protective factors that decrease problem behaviors. • Recognizing risk factors that increase problem behaviors.
Addresses healthy development and wellbeing	• Identifying opportunities to build leadership skills. • Developing resilience when experiencing adversity. • Modeling self-regulation and healthy coping skills.
Addresses preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying	• Promoting the use of local procedures for reporting bullying. • Improving attitudes towards seeking help when needed. • Encouraging behaviors that create positive learning environments.

Building Skills Related to Managing Emotions, Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships, and Positive Decision Making

Competency	Examples of Fulfilling Competency
Addresses student skills for managing emotions.	• Promoting the ability to cope with stress and anxiety. • Building capabilities to identify and communicate emotions in a healthy way. • Encouraging strategies to seek support when needed.
Addresses student skills for establishing and maintaining positive relationships.	• Developing the ability to be dependable to others. • Promoting skills to empathize with others. • Supporting strategies for peaceful conflict resolution.
Addresses student skills for positive decision-making.	• Strengthening problem-solving and critical thinking skills. • Promoting protective factors that reduce risky behavior. • Utilizing strategies to build students' ability to set and achieve goals.

Competencies in Practice

Below are examples of research-based best practices and best-practice-based programs implemented by school systems to address the areas of school mental health outlined in this document. These examples are organized within a tiered framework, illustrating how student support can be tailored to meet varying levels of individualized need. These strategies align with the Texas School Mental Health Framework, which offers further guidance and considerations for implementation.

Example Supports

TIER 1 Universal Supports
• Staff training (e.g., suicide awareness, bullying prevention, restorative practices)
• Positive classroom management and culture building
• Local policies and procedures (e.g., crisis protocols, bullying prevention, trauma-informed care)
• Supportive school environments

TIER 2 Targeted Supports
• Small group skill-building support
• Mentorship from a peer and/or a trusted adult
• Restorative discipline
• Screenings and connection to supportive services

TIER 3 Intensive Supports
• Individual mental health counseling
• Safety planning
• Student goal setting and progress monitoring
• Wraparound supports