

# *Education Code* 51925: Mental Health Instruction Expansion Education Plan

California Department of Education

Office of School-Based Health Programs

*Please note: This plan includes references to statutes and best practices. This Plan itself is non-binding and does not have the effect of law. Instead, any legal obligations are set forth in the applicable statutes. The California Department of Education (“CDE”) recommends that readers contact their legal counsel with questions regarding the application of law to a particular set of facts.*

[Senate Bill (SB) 224 (External Link)](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB224) was signed into law in October 2021 and was enacted in an effort to “ensure to that all California pupils in grades 1 to 12, inclusive, have the opportunity to benefit from a comprehensive mental health education." As part of SB 244, California *Education Code* Section 51925 was codified and states that “[e]ach school district, county office of education, state special school, and charter school that offers one or more courses in health education to pupils in middle school or high school shall include in those courses instruction in mental health that meets the requirements of [Article 6- Mandatory Mental Health Education]…. This instruction shall include all of the following:

* Reasonably designed instruction on the overarching themes and core principles of mental health.
* Defining signs and symptoms of common mental health challenges. Depending on pupil age and developmental level, this may include defining conditions such as depression, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and anxiety, including post-traumatic stress disorder.
* Elucidating the evidence-based services and supports that effectively help individuals manage mental health challenges.
* Promoting mental health wellness and protective factors, which include positive development, social and cultural connectedness and supportive relationships, resiliency, problem solving skills, coping skills, self-esteem, and a positive school and home environment in which pupils feel comfortable.
* The ability to identify warning signs of common mental health problems in order to promote awareness and early intervention so that pupils know to take action before a situation turns into a crisis. This shall include instruction on both of the following:
  + How to seek and find assistance from professionals and services within the school district that includes, but is not limited to, school counselors with a pupil personnel services credential, school psychologists, and school social workers, and in the community for themselves and others.
  + Evidence-based and culturally responsive practices that are proven to help overcome mental health challenges.
* The connection and importance of mental health to overall health and academic success and to co-occurring conditions, such as chronic physical conditions, chemical dependence, and substance abuse.
* Awareness and appreciation about the prevalence of mental health challenges across all populations, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses, including the impact of race, ethnicity, and culture on the experience and treatment of mental health challenges.
* Stigma surrounding mental health challenges and what can be done to overcome stigma, increase awareness, and promote acceptance. This shall include, to the extent possible, classroom presentations of narratives by trained peers and other individuals who have experienced mental health challenges and how they coped with their situations, including how they sought help and acceptance.”

## **This Mental Health Education Expansion Plan, created per California Education Code 51929, aims to help LEAs:**

* Understand that mental health education is a universal support and a part of California Health Education
* Identify resources to analyze, expand, and enhance current mental health education efforts, including scope and sequence, instructional strategies, instructional materials, and professional development opportunities
* Make a plan to enhance and expand their mental health education to address the well-being of students in an effort to ensure all students thrive in a safe and supportive learning environment.

## **Background:**

According to [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) (developed by the Orange County Office of Education in partnership with the CDE)[[1]](#footnote-1):

* The youth mental health crisis was intensified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Academy of Pediatrics (APA) declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, noting that “emotional and behavioral health challenges were of growing concern before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the public health emergency has only exacerbated these challenges.” Additionally, in December 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a public health advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation’s youth mental health crisis, calling our obligation not just medical, but moral.
* In addition to traditional medical model interventions, increasing mental health literacy among students is critical to building knowledge and skills that protect their health and support them in developing lifelong health enhancing behaviors.
* Mental health education is one of the best ways to increase awareness and encourage self-help seeking behavior, while simultaneously reducing the stigma associated with mental health challenges. Since students spend more hours at school than at home, the California public education system is the most efficient and effective setting for providing this education to all youth. Schools are, indeed, ideally positioned to provide not only mental health support, but also education. For more information, please visit the [CA Health Education Framework's Mental Health Education web page](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Mental-Health-Education.aspx).

## **Call to Action: What Can LEAs Do?**

Ways LEAs can move to action include the following:

* Assess if and how your schools are providing mental health education as a universal support for students (for example, as part of a health education course or integrated in other subjects). Pertinent inquiry may include:
* How is health content integrated into and/or taught in the classrooms, including mental health education? Who has access to the education (grade levels or student groups) and when (during the school year, summer school, or online independent study)? -Use data and engage members of the school community, including students, educators, parents/guardians, and community partners to determine the [instructional delivery model[[2]](#footnote-2) (External Link)](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10JQUrkliG5IuQeXkphSvxjM-QTsVNAeG8n_Ypj2Eh_o/edit#slide=id.g7b7faec8c5_0_94) that best meets the needs of students.
* Review health education content standards and instructional materials, if offered, to determine alignment with mental health education requirements per [*Ed. Code* 51925 (External Link)](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB224) and other [health education requirements (External Link)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xCCQYee06Qcobyfmogq2A_LzwqMyrGk03kXUwjimHoc/edit).
* Collaborate with your county office of education, community-based and non-profit organizations, and local health department to provide professional learning for health teachers and other educators teaching mental health education to build their capacity for providing skill-based mental health education that is trauma-informed and affirming for students.
* Evaluate your current efforts and create a plan to expand student access to mental health education in coordination with other frameworks and initiatives, including [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) (External Link)](https://cybhi.chhs.ca.gov/), [Community Schools](https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ts-communityschools.asp), [California's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/), and others.

## **Mental Health Education is Part of California Health Education:**

The [*Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (External Link)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Standards.aspx) provides guidance on the essential skills and knowledge that students should have at each grade level. Local educators are encouraged to apply these standards when developing curricular and instructional strategies for health education and other interdisciplinary subjects to ensure high quality health education that promotes [health literacy[[3]](#footnote-3) (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnZkhxBcG6bKDaH27eeCQ2eDIPV6klea/view).

According to the 2019 [*Health Education Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (External Link)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Framework.aspx), which is guided by the health education standards, health literate students can understand basic health information, directions, and services needed to make informed personal health decisions which may also contribute to healthier communities. Health-literate and health-informed students are:

* Critical thinkers and problem solvers when confronting health issues
* Self-directed learners who have the competence and skills to use basic health information and services in health-enhancing ways
* Effective communicators who organize and convey beliefs, ideas, and information about health issues, translating their knowledge to applied practices
* Responsible and productive citizens who help ensure that their community is kept healthy, safe, and secure

For more information, please see the [CA Health Education's Health Literacy PDF](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnZkhxBcG6bKDaH27eeCQ2eDIPV6klea/view).

According to [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx), California Health Education includes six content areas[[4]](#footnote-4):

-Nutrition and Physical Activity
-Growth, Development, and Sexual Health
-Injury Prevention and Safety
-Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs
-Mental, Emotional, and Social Health
-Personal and Community Health

Comprehensive health education can advance the physical, mental, and social emotional well-being of students. While Mental, Emotional, Social Health education is included as one of the six standalone content areas, it also links to other content in health education as a part of substance use prevention, healthy eating and physical activity, healthy relationships and body image, violence prevention, personal health, and seeking health services.

The table below [[5]](#footnote-5) summarizes the minimum recommended grade-level assignments for each of the six content areas. Mental, Emotional, and Social Health standards are included in Kindergarten, Grades 2, 3, and 6, Middle, and High School.

| *Grade-Level Emphasis* | *Nutrition and Physical Activity* | *Growth and Development* | *Sexual Health* | *Injury Prevention and Safety* | *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs* | *Mental, Emotional, and Social Health* | *Personal and Community Health* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Kindergarten | Yes | Yes | N/A | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Grade 1 | N/A | Yes | N/A | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| Grade 2 | Yes | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes | Yes | N/A |
| Grade 3 | N/A | Yes | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes | Yes |
| Grade 4 | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes | Yes | N/A | N/A |
| Grade 5 | Yes | Yes | Yes | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| Grade 6 | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes | Yes | Yes | N/A |
| Grades 7 and 8 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| High School (Grades 9 Through 12) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

In connection with the above-referenced six content areas, [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) describes Eight Overarching Health Education Content Standards which outline the skills and knowledge students can acquire to be health literate. These are:

Standard 1: Essential Concepts

Standard 2: Analyzing Health Influences

Standard 3: Accessing Valid Health Information

Standard 4: Interpersonal Communication

Standard 5: Decision Making

Standard 6: Goal Setting

Standard 7: Practicing Health-Enhancing Behaviors

Standard 8: Health Promotion

The model below provided by [CalfiorniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) communicates how health literacy can advance through these eight overarching content standards:

1: Essential Concepts
2: Analyzing Health Influences
3: Accessing Valid Health Information
4: Interpersonal Communication
5: Decision Making
6: Goal Setting
7: Practicing Health-Enhancing Behaviors
8: Health Promotion

Teaching these Eight Overarching Health Education Content Standards may advance the knowledge and skills of students and hopefully build their [Social Emotional Learning Core (SEL) Competencies[[6]](#footnote-6) (External Link)](https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/).

| **Health Education Standards** | **SEL Competencies** |
| --- | --- |
| Standard 1: Essential Concepts | All students will comprehend essential concepts related to enhancing health |
| Standard 2: Analyzing Health Influences | Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Decision Making |
| Standard 3: Accessing Valid Health Information | Decision Making |
| Standard 4: Interpersonal Communication | Relationship Skills, Decision Making |
| Standard 5: Decision Making | Decision Making |
| Standard 6: Goal Setting | Self-Management |
| Standard 7: Practicing Health-Enhancing Behaviors | Self-Management |
| Standard 8: Health Promotion | Self-Awareness, Social Awareness |

## **Available Resources**

Resources which may assist LEAs in analyzing, expanding, and enhancing their current mental health education efforts, including scope and sequence, instructional strategies, instructional materials, and professional development to build educator capacity include, but are not limited to the following:

### Quick Links to the Health Education Content Standards and Framework

* [Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (External Link)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Standards.aspx)
* [Health Education Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (External Link)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Framework.aspx)

### California Health Education Educator Guides

Includes a summary of the essential concepts (standard 1) for each content area, standard guides for teaching each skill (standards 2-8), and skill posters with model skill cues.

* [Grades K-3 Educator Booklet (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-3OxixslxUwIQY6poQXnOkoz6c1kKVJ7/view?usp=drive_link)
* [Grades 4-6 Educator Booklet (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13gl25ZjTM_PKLi48c176V0yDu3TY5UAI/view?usp=drive_link)
* [Middle School Educator Booklet (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EdAdvzvWIMglDuCBdMM0mFN6jNfEYy3X/view?usp=drive_link)
* [High School Educator Booklet (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ztqlpNpH73-QHR1EGPUmKc5mMQbH7Pyk/view?usp=drive_link)

### Professional learning for educators teaching mental health education based on the 2019 CA Health Education Framework guidance.

* [Online Self-Paced Mental, Emotional, and Social Health Education Course Modules[[7]](#footnote-7) (External Link)](https://rise.articulate.com/share/TzMD3vBG3a4U3MPgUUNxaT7lpAZGvmJF#/lessons/R2Jr415-6oM8Wy_CXN2_w72RUXQHVAL-) cover the following learning objectives:
  + Identify strategies, practices, and frameworks for creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments
  + Describe the purpose of the California Health Education Standards and how they advance health literacy
  + Explore current Mental, Emotional, and Social Health Education information and resources
  + Examine how to utilize Framework guidance, instructional models, and tools to teach skill-based Mental, Emotional, and Social Health Education

### [Health Education Instructional Materials Evaluation Toolkit (External Link)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E6jvjfrgrHkbhHgX_kbFZHu-nfux4aqW/view?usp=sharing)

* This toolkit may assist LEAs in their evaluation and adoption of instructional materials that align with the 2008 Health Education Standards, 2019 Health Education Curriculum Framework, and current California *Education Code* and State statutes.

### Mental Health Education Instructional Materials Assessment Tools:

* Per [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx), these tools are fillable forms for educators assess curriculum, supplemental materials, and other instructional materials used for the purpose of teaching mental health education to middle or high school students for alignment with SB 224 Mental Health requirements.
* [Grade 7-8: Mental Health Education Instructional Materials Assessment Tool (External Link)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UMjM2xa92M-hvZG-m9x5fhFSsFDNobI1OQ27YbQRnFg/edit?usp=sharing)
* [Grade 9-12: Mental Health Education Instructional Materials Assessment Tool (External Link)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12yZle9u2X4dT-uq4Hztbn7GMi8uUxfpyEeXWkAjussU/edit?usp=sharing)

### No cost resources and instructional materials

Can be found under the Educator Tab on the [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) website.

## **Next Steps:**

The CDE will continue to collaborate with partners, including the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association’s Curricular and Improvement Support Committee (CISC) Health Education Subcommittee, county offices of education, public health, and non-profit organizations to share opportunities for professional learning, as well as disseminate resources and tools that support high quality, skill-based mental health education to helps all students achieve mental health literacy.

Check back for professional development opportunities and updates as this work continues to develop.

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1. The Budget Act of 2017 (Assembly Bill 97) allocated funds to provide professional development and resources for the implementation of the new Health Education Framework. The CDE selected the Orange County Department of Education to facilitate the California Health Education Framework Rollout Project. Additional information may be found here: [About the Project - (California Health Education)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/About-HEF.aspx). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. as provided by [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. provided by [CaliforniaHealthEducation.org](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Standards - (California Health Education)](https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Standards.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Developed by the Orange County Department of Education in partnership with the California Department of Education [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. as developed by Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As developed by the Orange County Office of Education and adapted as an online course by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)