

EDC Guide for Project AWARE Grants

Applying for funding for EDC services? We can help!

This document provides guidance and resources on incorporating EDC's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) technical assistance and other services into your Project AWARE grant application.

EDC Solutions

[Education Development Center](#) (EDC) is a global nonprofit that advances lasting solutions to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity. Since 1958, EDC has collaborated with public and private partners to advance education and health solutions in communities across the globe. Through [EDC Solutions](#), EDC provides direct training, technical assistance, and consultation services to individual organizations, agencies, and professionals.

EDC's Multi- Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Services

EDC's MTSS Services provide customizable, high-impact deliverables designed to help district leaders strengthen their Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) with targeted, strategic focus areas that directly impact student wellness, safety, and success.

Districts may select any single service or combine multiple services to design a solution aligned to local priorities, strategic plans, and evolving student needs.

How It Works

Each MTSS service engages district teams of 3–8 educators and leaders, including principals, central office leaders, teachers, and support staff in the following:

- Two-year cohort model, working individually and as a network to learn from one another
- Includes eight, virtual professional development workshops
- Monthly coaching with individual consultants
- Established deliverables in policy and practice

Teams first conduct an assessment with EDC to determine strengths and areas for improvement and then create a data-informed action plan. In year 2, we begin implementing this plan and establish a longer-term sustainability plan at the end of the year. Long term technical assistance focused on continuous quality improvement (CQI) is also available for 2–3 years following initial project implementation.

For Project AWARE Grantees, EDC's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Mental Health and Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools services provide deliverables that directly align with the required activities of the grant. Visit each section of our Grant Guide to learn more!

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Mental Health

EDC's MTSS for Mental Health helps states and school districts strengthen their systems for promoting student mental health and providing timely, evidence-informed supports for students with emerging and intensive mental health needs.

→ [Jump to MTSS for Mental Health grant application guidance](#)

Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP)

EDC's Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP) framework supports schools in implementing comprehensive approaches to suicide prevention that are aligned with both best practices and schools' multi-tiered systems of support.

→ [Jump to MTSP grant application guidance](#)

Other EDC Initiatives

[Zero Suicide Institute at EDC](#) provides suicide prevention support in healthcare, including [Zero Suicide consultation](#) and [Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk \(AMSR\) training](#), and [Collaborative Safety Training](#). Organizations considering applying for campus Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or SAMHSA Zero Suicide grants should [access guides here](#).

[Community-Led Suicide Prevention](#) provides suicide prevention support for community coalitions and broader community organizations.

To learn more about EDC's broader work in schools, [follow this link to edc.org](#).

Grant Language

When you reference EDC services in your application, please use the following language to describe our role with your project:

EDC is pleased to provide the services described herein acting as a Contractor per 2 CFR part 200.331, Subrecipient and Contractor determinations.

Connect & Learn More

We are happy to meet with you as you prepare your application for this award. We will provide you with an estimate after we have been able to talk with you about the right selection of services for the intended outcomes the system seeks to achieve.

If you would like to discuss options with us, please contact us at Solutions@edc.org.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Mental Health

This section provides guidance on adding EDC's technical assistance (TA) services for MTSS for Mental Health to your grant application.

EDC's MTSS for Mental Health Framework

SUMMARY OF MTSS

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) provides an evidence-informed framework for promoting student mental and behavioral health by organizing prevention, early intervention, and intensive supports into a coordinated, data-informed system.

Rather than relying on isolated programs or disconnected initiatives, MTSS helps schools and districts build integrated infrastructure that promotes the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of all students, while ensuring that students experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges are identified early, matched to appropriate supports, and monitored over time.

Consistent with Project AWARE's three-tiered public health framework, effective MTSS includes universal promotion of student wellbeing for all students (Tier 1), targeted interventions for students with emerging needs (Tier 2), and intensive individualized supports and coordinated referral systems for students requiring more comprehensive services (Tier 3).

Effective MTSS also depends on strong leadership, multidisciplinary teams, staff capacity, data-informed decision making, implementation fidelity, continuous quality improvement, and meaningful partnerships with families and community providers.

Although EDC follows a consistent MTSS Improvement Process, each district's implementation priorities are determined through the Needs Assessment and Strategic Action Planning process, ensuring support is tailored to local strengths, needs, and goals.

EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach helps states and school districts strengthen their systems for promoting student mental and behavioral health through a structured process of

needs assessment, prioritization, action planning, implementation support, continuous improvement, and sustainability planning.

District and school leadership teams begin by completing EDC's MTSS Needs Assessment and Planning Process to identify strengths, gaps, and priorities across the key components of an effective MTSS, including leadership, Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports, identification and referral systems, staff capacity, implementation fidelity, and data systems.

Based on these findings, EDC works alongside district teams to develop strategic action plans and provides ongoing coaching, consultation, professional development, and technical assistance tailored to each district's identified priorities and local context.

Depending on local needs, districts may focus their MTSS improvement efforts on strengthening social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, digital wellbeing and healthy technology use including Artificial Intelligence (AI), suicide prevention, substance use prevention, universal mental health screening and referral systems, family and community engagement, and other evidence-informed strategies that build sustainable systems for promoting student mental and behavioral health.

KEY SERVICES IN MTSS

The following EDC MTSS Services could be included in your grant application. Services denotated with * may be adapted or removed based on client needs and preferences.

District Recruitment and Selection*

For state education agencies implementing EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach across multiple districts, EDC can support the development of district selection criteria, prepare model Requests for Applications (RFAs), host informational webinars, and assist in selecting districts that demonstrate both need and readiness for participation in the MTSS improvement process.

MTSS Kickoff Institute

The MTSS Kickoff Institute launches each district's MTSS improvement process by establishing a shared understanding of effective school mental and behavioral health systems and the role

of MTSS in promoting student wellbeing. District leadership teams review Project AWARE priorities, establish multidisciplinary leadership teams, clarify roles and responsibilities, and prepare for the needs assessment, prioritization, and action planning process.

MTSS Needs Assessment

District leadership teams complete EDC's MTSS Needs Assessment and Planning Process to examine the strengths, gaps, and opportunities within their current systems for promoting student mental and behavioral health. The assessment examines leadership and teaming structures; Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports; identification, referral, and progress-monitoring systems; staff capacity; implementation fidelity; family and community partnerships; and data systems. Results establish district priorities and guide the development of strategic action plans.

Prioritization and Strategic Action Planning

Using results from the needs assessment, EDC facilitates district teams through a structured process to identify high-leverage priorities based on district need, readiness, feasibility, and potential impact. District teams develop strategic action plans that establish measurable goals, improvement activities, timelines, responsible personnel, and indicators of success. Action plans are designed to build upon existing strengths while creating realistic, sustainable improvements in district systems.

MTSS Alignment and Integration

School districts often have numerous initiatives focused on student wellbeing, social and emotional learning, school climate, trauma-informed practices, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, digital wellbeing, attendance, behavior, and academic success. EDC guides district teams through a structured process to identify opportunities to align these initiatives within one coherent MTSS framework, clarify roles and responsibilities, reduce duplication of effort, and maximize the impact of existing resources. This process helps districts build more coordinated and sustainable systems while reducing initiative fatigue.

Communities of Practice and Peer Learning

EDC facilitates virtual Communities of Practice throughout the improvement process, providing participating districts with opportunities to deepen their understanding of effective MTSS while learning from one another. Sessions combine expert content with collaborative problem solving and address topics such as social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, digital wellbeing, AI in schools, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, family engagement, universal mental health screening, intervention selection, implementation science, data-informed decision making, and sustainability planning.

Implementation Coaching and Technical Assistance

Each participating district receives ongoing coaching from an EDC implementation specialist throughout the MTSS improvement process. Using implementation science, coaching is individualized to each district's priorities and may include reviewing assessment findings, refining action plans, strengthening policies and procedures, selecting evidence-informed programs and practices, improving referral and progress-monitoring systems, building data infrastructure, monitoring implementation fidelity, supporting family and community engagement, addressing implementation challenges, and guiding continuous improvement efforts.

Targeted Professional Development

EDC provides professional learning opportunities tailored to each district's identified priorities and local context. Professional development may focus on social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, digital wellbeing, healthy technology and AI use, universal mental health screening, referral systems, classroom practices that promote student wellbeing, implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and other topics that strengthen district capacity to support student mental and behavioral health. Professional learning is reinforced through ongoing coaching to support effective implementation and long-term sustainability.

Site Visits*

EDC can provide on-site consultation to support district improvement efforts. Site visits may include facilitated leadership meetings, observation of district and school practices, implementation feedback, strategic planning sessions, and consultation with district and school leadership teams to accelerate progress toward district goals and strengthen local capacity.

State or Regional MTSS Technical Assistance*

For state education agencies, EDC provides consultation to strengthen statewide systems for school mental and behavioral health and support implementation across multiple districts. Services may include facilitating state advisory groups, developing statewide implementation plans and guidance documents, creating model policies and resources, coordinating district improvement cohorts, strengthening regional coaching structures, supporting statewide professional learning, and providing guidance on statewide priorities such as school mental health, digital wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, suicide prevention, and substance use prevention.

Sustainability Planning

Throughout the Project AWARE implementation process, EDC works with district leadership teams to build sustainable systems that continue beyond the grant period. Sustainability planning includes embedding MTSS practices within district policies, leadership structures, professional learning systems, data review cycles, family and community partnerships, and continuous improvement processes. Districts also identify long-term funding strategies and implementation structures that support continued growth after Project AWARE funding concludes.

Evaluation*

EDC's evaluation team can support implementation and outcome evaluation throughout the project. Services may include development of evaluation plans, implementation fidelity monitoring, performance measurement, data collection systems, continuous quality

improvement processes, data analysis, SPARS reporting support, and development of reports and data visualizations that document project impact and inform ongoing decision making. Evaluation activities help districts monitor progress toward Project AWARE goals while supporting continuous improvement and long-term sustainability.

CONNECT & LEARN MORE

We are happy to meet with you as you prepare your application for this award. We will provide you with an estimate after we have been able to talk with you about the right selection of services for the intended outcomes you hope to achieve. If you would like to discuss options, email solutions@edc.org to set up a meeting.

Grant Narrative

Here are suggestions from EDC Solutions on how to incorporate EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach into your Project AWARE application and implementation activities.

This guide was created with the [SAMHSA NOFO No. SM-26-005](#) in mind, but may also be used for other funding opportunities focused on strengthening school mental and behavioral health systems.

SECTION 3. REQUIRED AND ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

The SAMHSA Notice of Funding (NOFO) provides a list of Required and Allowable activities in the Program Description. These activities center on student wellness and mental health infrastructure development within school systems following a three-tiered public health framework, including:

“Tier 1: Universal mental health promotion and substance use prevention for all youth

Tier 2: Secondary prevention and brief intervention services

Tier 3: Ensuring access to interventions for mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders.”

The Project AWARE required activities to closely align with EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach. Through a structured improvement process—including needs assessment,

prioritization, strategic action planning, implementation support, continuous improvement, and sustainability planning—EDC helps states and school districts strengthen systems that support student mental and behavioral health across all three tiers of the public health framework.

Rather than focusing on a single initiative, EDC works alongside districts to strengthen comprehensive systems for promoting social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, digital wellbeing, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, family and community engagement, universal mental health screening, referral systems, and access to evidence-informed interventions.

The sections below describe how EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach can help applicants address each of the Project AWARE required activities.

Relevant Required Activities

#1. “Within 6 months after award...Develop and maintain an advisory board that provides guidance on the implementation and sustainability of the Project AWARE program. If the award recipient is the LEA, SEA, SMHA, or local public or private non-profit organization, the advisory board members should include the following: Local Education Agency, State Education Agency, State Mental Health Agency, Family Members, & Youth representatives..”

EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach begins by helping state education agencies and school districts establish the leadership structures needed to guide successful implementation of Project AWARE. Through the MTSS Improvement Process, EDC supports the formation of multidisciplinary leadership and advisory teams that bring together education leaders, school mental health professionals, families, youth, community organizations, and behavioral health partners to guide implementation, monitor progress, and support long-term sustainability.

For state education agencies, EDC can facilitate the development and ongoing support of statewide advisory groups responsible for reviewing needs assessment findings, identifying statewide priorities, guiding implementation, coordinating partnerships across agencies, and supporting continuous improvement throughout the grant period.

For districts, EDC supports the development of representative district MTSS leadership teams that include administrators, general and special educators, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, family representatives, and community partners. These teams guide all phases of the MTSS Improvement Process, including needs assessment, prioritization, action planning, implementation support, and sustainability planning.

#2. “Within 6 months of award...establish local collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders who can link school-aged youth to relevant and developmentally appropriate school and community-based mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports.

Key stakeholders could include one or more of the following:

- *Community mental health providers/centers*
- *Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)*
- *Family and peer support community service providers/organizations*
- *Mobile crisis responders*
- *After-school programs/After-school providers*
- *Community and faith-based organizations*
- *Community substance use provider/centers”*

Strong partnerships between schools and community organizations are essential to an effective MTSS. Throughout the MTSS Improvement Process, EDC helps districts identify, strengthen, and formalize partnerships with community mental health providers, behavioral health organizations, substance use prevention organizations, pediatric providers, youth-serving agencies, crisis response providers, family organizations, and other community partners.

EDC also supports districts in developing coordinated referral pathways, clarifying roles and responsibilities across organizations, improving communication between school and community providers, and strengthening systems of care for students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. These partnerships become an integral part of districts' long-term MTSS infrastructure and sustainability planning.

#3. “Within 6 months after award...in collaboration with the key stakeholders, conduct a needs assessment and resource mapping of the LEA or TEA and their community. The needs assessment must address the following:

a. Updated prevalence and incidence data on mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status.

b. Existing policies, resources, and any gaps related to school mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders.

c. Community and LEA or TEA barriers and facilitators for project implementation”

The Needs Assessment is the foundation of EDC's MTSS Improvement Process. EDC facilitates a structured district self-assessment that examines strengths, gaps, and opportunities across the key components of an effective MTSS, including leadership, teaming structures, Tier 1 mental health promotion, Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, student identification and referral systems, staff capacity, implementation fidelity, data systems, family and community engagement, and existing policies and practices.

District teams are guided through a collaborative process of gathering information from multiple stakeholders—including educators, school mental health professionals, students, families, and community partners—to better understand current strengths, needs, available resources, and implementation barriers. Findings from the Needs Assessment directly inform district priorities and become the foundation for strategic action planning, implementation support, and continuous improvement throughout Project AWARE.

#5. “Within 8 months after award, Develop a Strategic Plan to Implement a Three-Tiered Public Health Framework of Programs and Services in the LEA or TEA: (Tier 1) universal mental health promotion and substance use and co-occurring disorders prevention interventions for all youth to support a positive school climate; (Tier 2) secondary prevention and brief intervention services; and (Tier 3) Referral to individualized mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorder interventions to address the needs of individual school-aged youth.”

Developing and implementing a strategic plan is the central focus of EDC's MTSS

Improvement Process. Using findings from the Needs Assessment, district leadership teams participate in a structured prioritization and strategic planning process to identify high-impact opportunities for strengthening their MTSS. EDC facilitates the development of realistic, data-informed action plans that establish measurable goals, implementation activities, timelines, responsible personnel, and methods for monitoring progress.

Through ongoing coaching, consultation, and professional development, EDC supports districts in implementing and continuously improving these plans over time. Depending on district priorities, implementation support may focus on social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, digital wellbeing, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, universal mental health screening, referral systems, family and community engagement, or other evidence-informed practices that strengthen Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

Activity	EDC's MTSS for Mental Health Approach
Tier 1: Implementing a comprehensive mental health awareness program for youth, their families, and school staff that addresses the mental health, substance use, and co-occurring needs of students	EDC's MTSS for Mental Health framework helps school districts develop comprehensive Tier 1 systems that promote positive mental health, social-emotional wellbeing, and healthy school climates for all students. District teams are supported in selecting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-informed universal mental health promotion strategies, including social and emotional learning curricula, trauma-informed instructional practices, positive school climate initiatives, substance use prevention strategies, and other classroom and schoolwide practices that strengthen protective factors and student wellbeing. Through ongoing coaching and implementation support, EDC helps districts integrate these practices into existing MTSS structures, monitor implementation fidelity, and continuously improve their universal prevention efforts.
Tier 1: Implementing a school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training program. Tier 1: Training adults to better recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health, substance use, and	EDC supports districts in implementing evidence-informed mental health awareness, suicide prevention, and substance use prevention training for educators, school staff, students, and families. Professional learning includes recognizing early warning signs of depression, anxiety, trauma, suicide risk, substance use, and other behavioral health concerns; understanding referral pathways; and responding appropriately within school systems. Districts may also incorporate EDC's expertise in suicide prevention, universal mental health screening, and evidence-based suicide prevention practices—

co-occurring disorders in school-aged youth.	including Collaborative Safety Planning and other specialized trainings—to strengthen comprehensive mental health promotion efforts.
Tier 1: Expanding workforce capacity for the mental health and related workforce and other school staff.	EDC provides professional development and ongoing coaching that builds the capacity of educators, school mental health professionals, administrators, and support staff to implement effective MTSS practices. Professional learning may include mental health promotion, trauma-informed practices, classroom strategies that promote student wellbeing, universal screening, referral and intervention processes, implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, substance use prevention, suicide prevention, and data-informed decision making. Coaching helps translate professional learning into consistent implementation within classrooms, schools, and district systems.
Tier 1: Promoting awareness through the education of parents, teachers, school staff, and students, on the healthy use of technology to ensure the physical and mental health of children and young people are protected when engaging in online activity.	EDC is a national leader in promoting digital wellbeing through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Districts are supported in developing comprehensive approaches that extend beyond cellphone policies to include healthy technology and AI use, digital citizenship, family engagement, classroom instruction, professional development, and student supports. EDC assists districts in implementing Tier 1 digital wellbeing initiatives, identifying students experiencing technology-related mental health challenges, and developing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for concerns such as problematic technology use, cyberbullying, and other digital wellbeing challenges.
Tier 1: Developing student-led annual projects to address substance use and co-occurring disorders...and promote school-aged youth mental health and well-being	EDC supports districts in meaningfully engaging students and families throughout MTSS implementation. Districts receive guidance in developing student leadership opportunities, youth advisory groups, peer mentoring initiatives, awareness campaigns, and student-led activities that promote mental health, substance use prevention, digital wellbeing, and positive school climate. Student and family voice is intentionally incorporated throughout the needs assessment, action planning, implementation, and continuous improvement process to ensure supports reflect local priorities and student experiences.
Tier 2: Developing a multi-disciplinary team to provide ongoing support for school-aged youth who are at risk of, or experiencing, mental, emotional, or behavioral distress and/or crisis. The	One of the foundational components of EDC's MTSS approach is establishing multidisciplinary district and school leadership teams responsible for planning, implementation, and continuous improvement. Teams typically include district administrators, principals, general and special educators, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, family representatives, and community mental health partners. EDC provides facilitation, coaching, and technical assistance to strengthen collaboration, clarify

team should include relevant community providers and school personnel.	team roles, improve decision-making, and coordinate supports across education, mental health, substance use prevention, and community systems.
Tier 2: Screening, identifying, and referring school-aged youth who have been identified for being at risk to appropriate mental health, substance use, and co-occurring services and supports Providing brief intervention services to support school-aged youth, who are at risk of or experiencing mental, emotional, or behavioral distress and/or crisis.	EDC's MTSS framework emphasizes developing systematic processes for identifying students who require additional support and matching them with appropriate interventions. Districts receive technical assistance in implementing universal mental health screening; strengthening educator capacity to recognize warning signs; establishing referral pathways; selecting evidence-informed Tier 2 interventions; monitoring student progress; and continuously reviewing intervention effectiveness through data. EDC also supports implementation of brief interventions, suicide prevention practices, and coordinated approaches that address depression, anxiety, trauma, substance use, problematic technology use and digital wellbeing concerns, and other behavioral health concerns.
Tier 3: Establishing referral processes to ensure that school-aged youth in need of more intensive services can access school-based and/or community mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports and services	EDC works with districts to strengthen Tier 3 systems that ensure students with intensive needs receive timely, coordinated services. Technical assistance includes developing referral protocols, clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening collaboration between school-based and community providers, developing reintegration procedures following hospitalization or crisis, and using data systems to monitor referrals, service delivery, and student outcomes. These efforts help districts build sustainable systems that improve access to comprehensive mental health, substance use, technology-related mental health concerns, and crisis services.
Tier 3: Establishing a network of providers (in school and/or community) who can accept school-aged youth referrals for appropriate mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports and services, including crisis response and stabilization	EDC supports districts in developing sustainable partnerships with community mental health providers, substance use treatment organizations, crisis response agencies, behavioral health providers, hospitals, and other youth-serving organizations. Through needs assessment, resource mapping, implementation planning, and ongoing coaching, districts strengthen coordination between school and community services, improve referral pathways, and ensure students receive appropriate care across the full continuum of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery.

#6. “1 month after the start of Year 2: Develop a plan to sustain the Project AWARE program that includes:

- *Identifying the desired outcomes and sustainable changes being made.*
- *Identifying any needed changes to current policies to support the Project AWARE project.*
- *Identifying any required financial resources, including State Medicaid funding.*
- *Identifying what is needed to maintain mental health, substance use and co-occurring services and supports for school-aged youth when federal funding ends.*

Sustainability planning is integrated throughout EDC's MTSS Improvement Process rather than occurring only at the end of the project. District leadership teams are supported in embedding MTSS within district policies, leadership structures, professional learning systems, data review processes, family and community partnerships, and continuous improvement cycles. During Year 2, EDC facilitates structured sustainability planning to help districts identify long-term leadership structures, funding strategies, policy changes, workforce development plans, and implementation supports that will allow Project AWARE activities to continue after grant funding concludes.

#7. Develop an Initial Evaluation Plan: “Within 3 months after award and report progress annually in the Programmatic Progress Report (PPR)

Develop an initial evaluation plan for your project to improve project performance and increase understanding of the factors that contribute to the success of the program. This plan should include:

- *Proposed evaluation questions and design*
- *Data collection*
- *Report evaluation findings and recommendations*

Evaluation and continuous improvement are integrated throughout the MTSS Improvement Process using principles of implementation science to help districts monitor progress, improve implementation fidelity, and sustain systems over time. EDC can assist grantees in

developing evaluation plans that monitor implementation fidelity, progress toward district goals, professional development activities, implementation of action plans, and improvements in school mental health systems.

EDC's evaluation team can also support development of data collection systems, performance measures, implementation dashboards, SPARS reporting, data analysis, and reporting activities that meet Project AWARE requirements while providing district leadership teams with meaningful information to guide ongoing decision making and continuous improvement.

As an optional add-on, EDC can support evaluation planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting activities related to the implementation of EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach and broader Project AWARE grant activities. EDC's evaluation services can help states and school districts develop practical systems for monitoring implementation and outcomes throughout the MTSS improvement process, including participation in professional development and Communities of Practice, completion of needs assessments and strategic action plans, implementation of evidence-informed mental health promotion and intervention strategies, strengthening of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports, and progress toward district improvement goals.

EDC can also assist grantees in identifying meaningful performance measures and data sources to assess project impact, including changes in staff knowledge and capacity, school climate and student wellbeing indicators, implementation fidelity, screening, referral, and support practices, family and community engagement, and other Project AWARE-required performance measures.

Evaluation activities may also include analysis and interpretation of MTSS Needs Assessment data, development of summary reports and data visualizations, SPARS reporting support, and ongoing continuous quality improvement activities to guide implementation and strengthen the long-term sustainability of district mental and behavioral health systems.

Relevant Allowable Activities

#1. “Assist teachers, school personnel, and partner organization personnel to develop skills that promote staff wellness, mental well-being, and resilience to support and refer school-aged youth with mental health, substance use or co-occurring concerns to needed services”

Building workforce capacity is a central component of EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach. Based on district priorities identified through the Needs Assessment and Strategic Action Planning process, EDC provides professional development, coaching, and implementation support that strengthens the knowledge, confidence, and capacity of educators, school mental health professionals, administrators, and community partners to promote student mental and behavioral health.

Professional learning may include topics such as social and emotional wellbeing, school climate, trauma-informed practices, digital wellbeing, substance use prevention, suicide prevention, recognizing signs of student distress, universal mental health screening, referral systems, implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and classroom practices that promote student wellbeing. Ongoing coaching helps districts translate professional learning into sustainable practice while also supporting staff wellbeing, resilience, and continuous improvement.

#4. "Consult with stakeholders (e.g., principals, teachers, local Tribal officials, etc.) to establish and implement a school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training policy. The training policy shall include a plan to provide evidence-based, developmentally appropriate training to students in grades 6 through 12, in coordination with school-based mental health resources; and provide for periodic retraining of students. The training plan must address the following:

- *Suicide prevention education and awareness, including associated risk factors*
- *Methods students can use to seek help*
- *Student resources for suicide awareness and prevention*
- *SEAs, LEAs, or TEAs must submit the training plan as Attachment 10 to be considered for five additional points."*

Suicide prevention is one important component of EDC's comprehensive MTSS for Mental Health approach. Districts participating in the MTSS Improvement Process may choose to prioritize strengthening suicide prevention systems through needs assessment, strategic planning, implementation support, and professional development. EDC supports districts in developing or strengthening policies, protocols, staff training, and referral systems that align with evidence-informed school suicide prevention practices and integrate seamlessly within broader school mental health systems.

Districts may also incorporate EDC's specialized suicide prevention expertise, including Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention (MTSP), Collaborative Safety Planning, Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR), and other evidence-informed resources, as part of their broader MTSS improvement efforts. These services help districts strengthen student suicide awareness and prevention while ensuring efforts are coordinated with mental health promotion, screening, referral systems, family engagement, and other Project AWARE activities.

5. “Consider the communities that will be affected by this project and engage them in the overall program planning. To do so, SAMHSA encourages applicants to:

- *Engage communities, when practicable, during the design phase,*
- *Develop programs in consultation with communities benefiting from or impacted by the program, and*
- *Consider available data, evidence, and evaluation results from past programs to make every effort to extend eligibility requirements to all potential applicants.”*

Family, youth, and community engagement are integrated throughout EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach. District leadership teams are encouraged to engage students, families, educators, community mental health providers, and other stakeholders throughout the Needs Assessment, Prioritization, Strategic Action Planning, Implementation Support, and Continuous Improvement phases of the MTSS Improvement Process.

EDC provides tools and facilitation strategies that help districts gather stakeholder input, establish meaningful partnerships, and ensure implementation reflects local strengths, priorities, and needs. Districts may also receive support in developing family engagement

strategies, student leadership opportunities, community education initiatives, and collaborative partnerships that strengthen implementation and promote long-term sustainability.

Data Collection, Performance Measurement, & Performance Assessment

“You must report program-specific data in SAMHSA’s Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) on a quarterly basis. The data collection and reporting tool and related guidance will be provided post-award....Recipients must collect and report data on the following indicators:

- 1. Number of new individuals reached with education and/or prevention on mental health, substance use, or suicide*
- 2. Number of individuals screened for mental health or related interventions, substance use, or suicidality*
- 3. Number of individuals who screened positive for mental health or related interventions, substance use, or suicidality*
- 4. Number of individuals referred for mental health or related services, substance use prevention and treatment services, or services for suicide risk, ideation, or behavior*
- 5. Number of new individuals who received brief intervention for mental health or suicide prevention*
- 6. The number of staff trained in mental health or related interventions or suicide prevention”*

EDC's MTSS for Mental Health approach helps states and school districts establish practical systems for collecting, monitoring, interpreting, and reporting Project AWARE performance data. Throughout the MTSS Improvement Process, district leadership teams develop data systems that support continuous improvement and monitor implementation of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports, including mental health promotion activities, professional development, screening and referral practices, intervention implementation, family engagement, and other Project AWARE activities.

As an optional add-on, EDC's evaluation team can support development of data collection procedures, performance measures, implementation fidelity monitoring, SPARS reporting, data analysis, visualization of findings, and continuous quality improvement processes.

Evaluation services help districts use data not only to meet grant reporting requirements, but also to strengthen decision making, monitor progress toward district goals, and sustain improvements in school mental and behavioral health systems over time.

Together, these services help Project AWARE grantees build sustainable systems that improve student mental and behavioral health, strengthen district capacity, and ensure that effective practices continue well beyond the grant period.

Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP)

This section provides guidance on building the Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP) framework within your Project AWARE grant application.

MTSP FRAMEWORK

EDC's Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools framework supports schools in implementing comprehensive approaches to suicide prevention that are aligned with both best practices and schools' multi-tiered systems of support.

SUMMARY OF MTSP

MTSP provides a two-school year process which guides school systems in the development of effective, comprehensive, and sustainable suicide prevention strategies across multi-tiered systems of support.

Through learning events providing best practice information, technical assistance and guided support offered by subject matter experts, and access to EDC's evidence-informed suicide prevention resources, school systems gain the capacity to prevent suicide and promote all students' mental health and wellbeing.

School teams walk through a two-year process that engages the entire school system in assessing school suicide prevention needs, action planning, and direct implementation of action steps that ensure the [6 key components](#) of evidence-based school suicide prevention are developed, strengthened, and sustained in school systems.

KEY SERVICES IN MTSP

The following MTSP Services could be included in your grant application. *Services denotated with * may be adapted or removed based on client needs and preferences.*

MTSP School District Selection*

The MTSP process engages cohorts of 3 to 20 school district teams in the development of 6 key components of school suicide prevention. EDC can provide model RFAs, host informational

webinars, and support state and local agencies in the selection of school districts both in need of and prepared for the implementation process.

MTSP Kickoff Workshop

The MTSP Kickoff Workshop can be hosted in-person or virtually and provides school systems with best practice content on suicide prevention, safe messaging, and effective strategies for preventing suicide in school systems. This Kickoff workshop is hosted at the beginning of the two-year process to ensure all school teams are prepared to develop 6 key components of school suicide prevention.

MTSP Assessment

EDC's MTSP Assessment provides an in-depth Environmental Assessment that school teams complete together following the kickoff event. This assessment asks schools to reflect on their gaps, strengths, and to rank their level of preparedness to implement and sustain key activities within the 6 key components of school suicide prevention. School teams are provided with a minimum of a month to discuss, explore, and gather feedback from the wider community on the different MTSP questions. This assessment is completed at the beginning and end of the two-year process to allow school teams to measure progress and demonstrate impact.

MTSP Action Planning & Implementation

EDC provides all participating school teams with action planning templates. These templates are specially designed to build off each school team's unique MTSP assessment results. The templates support schools in identifying priority areas for development, feasible goals and objectives, specific action steps to achieve each objective, and associated data schools can collect to monitor progress. School teams engage in strategic action planning during school year 1 and focus on implementation of action plans during school year 2.

MTSP Communities of Practice (CoP) Workshops

EDC provides 4 virtual, CoP workshops via Zoom during each school year (8 total CoP workshops across years 1 and 2 in the initiative). These workshops provide continuing education to school teams on topics such as developing strong suicide prevention protocols;

best practices around mental health screenings, risk assessments, and referrals in schools; and building a strong foundation of mental health promotion for all students, staff, and families. Workshops are designed to provide both content and open time for participating school teams to share and learn from one another around challenges, successes, experiences, and questions.

MTSP School District Technical Assistance

EDC connects all participating district teams with EDC Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists who are experts in school mental health, student wellbeing, and suicide prevention. The TA Specialists join school team leads in monthly phone calls where they are able to ask questions, receive feedback, and strategize around ongoing implementation efforts. TA Specialists additionally provide review and feedback on MTSP assessment results, completed action planning templates, suicide prevention protocols, and school team implementation of strategies.

MTSP Site Visits*

EDC TA services can include site visits where EDC TA Specialists travel to assigned school districts to host 1-to-1.5-hour meetings. During these in-person meetings, TA specialists learn about the unique context, culture, and resources of each district. Site visits can be hosted at the launch of school year 1 and at the end of school year 2 in the initiative.

MTSP State or Regional Technical Assistance

EDC TA services can include state or regional TA specific to SEAs, LEAs, and TEAs. This Technical Assistance includes support in forming a state or regional-level workgroup focused on student mental health and suicide prevention, and facilitating a series of 3-4 workgroup meetings, developing a suicide prevention implementation plan, and/or creating a suicide-prevention related model policy that aligns with state and/or regional needs.

MTSP Collaborative Safety Planning Sessions*

EDC's Collaborative Safety Planning training was developed by EDC's team of Zero Suicide experts and has been adapted to focus on safety planning within the unique constraints of K12

education systems. The adapted Collaborative Safety Planning training can be conducted virtually or in-person and includes focused content and facilitated group discussions on incorporating safety planning effectively within school's suicide risk response protocols, student support practices, and school reentry procedures. This training is an optional "add-on" that can provide focused school wellness team professional development in safety planning as a best practice intervention for supporting youth who are at risk for suicide.

MTSP Elementary Age Youth Suicide Prevention Sessions*

EDC's Elementary Age Youth Suicide Prevention training was developed by EDC's team of school wellbeing and youth development experts and focuses on building the capacity of school staff to integrate developmentally appropriate practices for the promotion of protective factors against suicide and the identification and support of young youth who are at risk of suicide. This training provides an overview of the current state of research on what is tested and shown to be effective in young youth suicide prevention-- including the incorporation of life-skill development practices in suicide prevention, screening tools and safety planning practices for working with young youth, and language considerations in discussing suicide. This training is an optional "add-on" that can provide focused school team professional development for staff working in elementary grades.

MTSP Evaluation*

EDC's evaluation experts can support school districts and state agencies in evaluating both the implementation and outcomes of MTSP initiatives. EDC works with participating school teams to develop practical processes for collecting and monitoring data related to MTSP activities, such as participation in trainings and Communities of Practice workshops, completion of MTSP assessments and action plans, implementation of suicide prevention protocols, and delivery of school staff professional development activities. EDC additionally supports districts in identifying priority outcomes and selecting appropriate measures and data sources to assess impact, such as changes in staff knowledge and preparedness, school climate and wellbeing indicators, referral and support practices, and progress in implementing the 6 key components of school suicide prevention. These evaluation services help districts meet grant reporting

requirements, support continuous quality improvement efforts, and strengthen communication and buy-in among school and community stakeholders.

CONNECT & LEARN MORE

To learn more about EDC's MTSP framework and TA and how it might be a fit for your grant application, visit go.edc.org/EDC-Solutions-MTSP.

We are happy to meet with you as you prepare your application for this award. We will provide you with an estimate after we have been able to talk with you about the right selection of services for the intended outcomes you hope to achieve. If you would like to discuss options, email solutions@edc.org to set up a meeting.

Grant Narrative

Here are suggestions from EDC Solutions on how to incorporate EDC's MTSP approach into your Project AWARE application and implementation activities.

This guide was created with the [SAMHSA NOFO No. SM-26-005](#) in mind, but it is a tool that can be used for other funding opportunities for youth and school-based mental health promotion and suicide prevention as well.

SECTION 3. REQUIRED AND ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

The SAMHSA Notice of Funding (NOFO) provides a list of Required and Allowable activities in the Program Description. These activities center on student wellness and mental health infrastructure development within school systems following a three-tiered public health framework, including:

“Tier 1: Universal mental health promotion and substance use prevention for all youth

Tier 2: Secondary prevention and brief intervention services

Tier 3: Ensuring access to interventions for mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders.”

These tiers align directly with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and EDC’s MTSP services that provide guidance, resources, and technical assistance to school districts in developing broad suicide prevention infrastructure which includes resources and strategies across these tiers to strengthen students’ social emotional well-being, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. MTSP services that can be used to achieve required and allowable Project AWARE activities are provided below.

Please note: The 2026 NOFO states that 5 extra points will be provided to SEAs, LEAs, and TEAs, who choose to “establish and implement a school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training policy.” MTSP is an ideal framework and set of services that help SEAs invest in this important suicide awareness and training policy work—and to strengthen their Project AWARE Grant Application.

Relevant Required Activities

#1. “Within 6 months after award... Develop and maintain an advisory board that provides guidance on the implementation and sustainability of the Project AWARE program. If the award recipient is the LEA, SEA, SMHA, or local public or private non-profit organization, the advisory board members should include the following: Local Education Agency, State Education Agency, State Mental Health Agency, Family Members, & Youth representatives.”

[The MTSP Framework](#) provides guidance to a state or region forming this advisory board.

EDC offers [state or regional-level technical assistance](#) for any agency looking to form a state or regional-level advisory board focused on student mental health and suicide prevention.

This technical assistance includes the facilitation of 3-4 advisory board meetings and ongoing support in implementation and sustainability planning. This advisory board can lead the development of a mental health infrastructure and suicide prevention implementation plan and/or related model policies that align with state and/or regional needs. EDC’s technical assistance can help applicants more effectively convene state and/or regional partners and provide an effective structure for forming and maintaining an advisory board which informs the

Project AWARE planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. EDC serves as a non-biased third party supporting the facilitation of group discussions and decision-making across different sectors and settings within the advisory board.

Additionally, Two of EDC's 6 key components of school suicide prevention are the engagement of key school community members and community partners in implementation of the two-year MTSP process. School implementation teams are encouraged to engage both students and families of students on their implementation teams. Districts are also supported in making connections with local community stakeholders in mental health and suicide prevention promotion and treatment services, such as mental health agencies, coalitions, nonprofits, and peer support groups who all help to inform MTSP assessments, action plans, and suicide prevention strategies.

Within Project AWARE grants, MTSP school implementation teams will be encouraged to partner directly with LEAs, SEAs, and SMHAs in their rollout of MTSP. Additionally, districts will be supported in engaging families and youth in their MTSP activities.

#2. "Within six months of award...establish local collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders who can link school-aged youth to relevant and developmentally appropriate school and community-based mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports. Key stakeholders could include one or more of the following:

- *Community mental health providers/centers*
- *Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)*
- *Family and peer support community service providers/organizations*
- *Mobile crisis responders*
- *After-school programs/After-school providers*
- *Community and faith-based organizations*
- *Community substance use provider/centers"*

Two of EDC's 6 key components of school suicide prevention are the engagement of key school community members and community partners in implementation of the two-year

MTSP process. Schools participating in MTSP form school implementation teams and are provided with support in incorporating community and state partners into those teams. School districts are likewise encouraged to identify and develop or strengthen relationships with local mental health providers, suicide prevention experts, and community service organizations who can provide mental health services, risk assessments, and suicide-specific treatments for students. MTSP provides a useful framework which LEAs, SEAs, SMHAs, and school districts can use to guide their partnerships in developing mental health infrastructure for Project AWARE.

If EDC [State or Regional-Level Technical Assistance](#) is provided, outreach/recruitment support to and engagement of these different settings, sectors, and organizations within the Project AWARE advisory board can be a key focus of EDC technical assistance and support.

#3. “Within 6 months after award...in collaboration with the key stakeholders, conduct a needs assessment and resource mapping of the LEA or TEA and their community. The needs assessment must address the following:

a. Updated prevalence and incidence data on mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status.

b. Existing policies, resources, and any gaps related to school mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders.

c. Community and LEA or TEA barriers and facilitators for project implementation”

[The MTSP Framework](#) provides guidance to a state or region on key environmental factors to assess that directly inform an understanding of local needs, gaps, strengths, and resources in student wellbeing, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. EDC’s 3 state-level technical assistance advisory board meetings can focus on laying out a student mental health and suicide prevention needs assessment plan, monitoring the effective implementation of that needs assessment, and group decision-making/action planning based on needs assessment results.

Additionally, [EDC's MTSP Environmental Assessment](#) provides a key data collection tool that can inform the Project AWARE needs assessment. The assessment asks school districts to provide information on their current implementation of and access to key activities and resources for mental health promotion and suicide prevention-- such as screenings, suicide awareness trainings, life-skill development practices, mental health provider services, policies and protocols related to student mental health and suicide prevention, and more. The tool provides a tested mechanism for gathering information grantees can incorporate into their needs assessment.

Additionally, MTSP provides the opportunity for individual districts to conduct their own local needs assessments using the MTSP Assessment-- in addition to a state or regional assessment for Project AWARE planning-- and to repeat this assessment over the course of 2 or more school years to monitor their needs and growth over time. EDC provides leadership and support in analyzing and interpreting the assessment data.

#5. "Within 8 months after award, Develop a Strategic Plan to Implement a Three-Tiered Public Health Framework of Programs and Services in the LEA or TEA: (Tier 1) universal mental health promotion and substance use and co-occurring disorders prevention interventions for all youth to support a positive school climate; (Tier 2) secondary prevention and brief intervention services; and (Tier 3) Referral to individualized mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorder interventions to address the needs of individual school-aged youth."

MTSP for schools provides a framework that aids school districts in assessing, action planning, and implementing efforts to develop comprehensive mental health promotion and suicide prevention efforts in schools that align with multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). This framework and service can be integrated into Project AWARE implementation plans, providing evidence-based and feasible strategies districts can use to promote youth wellbeing and prevent suicide. The framework provides school systems with language and resources that align with existing MTSS and which can be directly integrated into Project AWARE grantee plans addressing all levels of the Three-Tiered Public Health Framework described above.

EDC’s [3 state-level technical assistance advisory board meetings and ongoing technical assistance](#) can include a direct focus on laying out a state or regional Project AWARE student mental health and suicide prevention action plan based on Project AWARE needs assessment results—and using this action plan to guide the rollout of MTSP in supported school districts.

Within this strategic plan, Project AWARE Grantees are asked to implement specific activities across all three tiers. The table below lists the required activities across all 3 tiers that MTSP can help school districts address:

Required Activity	MTSP Services or Support
Tier 1: Implementing a comprehensive mental health awareness program for youth, their families, and school staff that addresses the mental health, substance use, and co-occurring needs of students	One of MTSP’s 6 key components is the promotion of protective factors against suicide. The development of life-skills in youth (such as healthy coping and stress management skills, good decision-making capabilities, substance use prevention, and more) have been shown to serve as key protective factors against suicide. MTSP provides schools with technical assistance, resources, and education on integrating life-skill development practices within school classrooms, programming, and overall environment to promote protective factors against suicide.
Tier 1: Implementing a school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training program. Tier 1: Training adults to better recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders in school-aged youth.	One of MTSP’s 7 key components is the identification and support of youth who are at risk for suicide. One evidence-informed strategy called for within this component is the hosting of regular mental health awareness and suicide prevention training programs focused on recognizing the warning signs of both student distress and suicide. MTSP provides schools with guidance for effective implementation of suicide awareness and prevention programs that follow best practice recommendations for safe and effective messaging. Likewise, MTSP supports schools in strategically connecting these awareness programs with relevant school suicide risk response policies and protocols to make them more applicable, effective, and sustainable in school systems.
Tier 1: Expanding workforce capacity for the mental health and related workforce and other school staff.	One of MTSP’s 6 key components is engaging key school community members in mental health and suicide prevention. This key component supports districts in identifying the unique roles different staff play in suicide prevention and laying out professional development (PD) plans that align with those roles. Districts learn best practices in school suicide

	prevention and are supported in identifying the unique PD needs of their staff and contextually appropriate, evidence-based trainings for addressing those needs. Additionally, districts are supported in linking these professional development plans with the suicide prevention policies and protocols that provide strength and sustainability to district PD efforts (see below). Two of MTSP's 6 key components are the creation of policies and protocols for identifying and supporting youth who are at risk for suicide and responding effectively to suicide deaths (postvention protocols). These policies and protocols are intentionally connected with wider threat assessment and violence prevention policies and programs. MTSP provides schools with best practice and model content for effective suicide risk response and postvention protocols, as well as in-depth, individualized technical assistance in developing new protocols or improving existing protocols. The MTSP implementation team is tasked with leading this protocol development and directly engaging school safety or crisis response teams in the work to ensure all core staff are trained in effective application of risk response protocols. Finally, schools are supported in laying out plans for sustainable training and professional development for all staff in understanding their unique roles within the policies and protocols. Additionally, EDC's optional suicide prevention training add-ons—including Collaborative Safety Planning and Elementary Age Youth Suicide Prevention—provide focused training, role-plays, and group-based discussions that support school staff in strengthening their understanding of their roles in preventing suicide with youth identified as at risk for suicide, as well as youth in elementary grades.
Tier 1: Promoting awareness through the education of parents, teachers, school staff, and students, on the healthy use of technology to ensure the physical and mental health of children and young people are protected when engaging in online activity	Across MTSP's key components, content on ensuring youth wellbeing through social media and online activities is addressed. For example, guidance is provided through the MTSP virtual CoPs on how to incorporate online activities into suicide risk response and postvention protocols and strategies are provided for using social media to engage families and youth in positive mental health promotion and suicide prevention activities.

Tier 1: Developing student-led annual projects to address substance use and co-occurring disorders...and promote school-aged youth mental health and well-being	One of EDC's 6 key components is the engagement of key school community members. Within this component, school districts are encouraged to actively engage youth in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of ongoing efforts to promote student wellbeing and prevent suicide. Districts are supported in identifying roles for youth to play within MTSP implementation teams, completion and review of MTSP assessments and action plans, and ongoing improvements to existing efforts. Furthermore, districts are supported in identifying and facilitating student-led mental health and suicide prevention campaigns and events that are aligned with their local culture, resources, and context.
Tier 2: Developing a multi-disciplinary team to provide ongoing support for school-aged youth who are at risk of, or experiencing, mental, emotional, or behavioral distress and/or crisis. The team should include relevant community providers and school personnel	Two of EDC's 6 key components are engaging key school community members and developing community partnerships. School districts participating in MTSP form implementation teams that include a minimum of administrative, education, and student wellness/mental health staff. Teams are supported in forming relationships with community mental health providers and other suicide prevention experts who can support the school team in better identifying, responding to, and providing evidence-based services to students experiencing a mental health or suicide-related crisis. MTSP trainings and technical assistance provide ongoing support to districts in strengthening these internal and external partnerships, formalizing roles and responsibilities across team members, and ensuring efforts are aligned with policies and protocols for suicide risk response.
Tier 2: Screening, identifying, and referring school-aged youth who have been identified for being at risk to appropriate mental health, substance use, and co-occurring services and supports Providing brief intervention services to support school-aged youth, who are at risk of or experiencing mental, emotional, or behavioral distress and/or crisis	Two of EDC's 6 key components of school suicide prevention are the development of policies and protocols for identifying and supporting youth who are at risk for suicide and the implementation of activities to identify and support youth who are at risk. MTSP provides schools with education on best practices for identifying youth in need of mental health services. This education includes best practices for implementing trainings on recognizing student distress, choosing universal or indicated mental health screenings, providing students who are at risk with best practice interventions such as collaborative safety plans, and putting in place processes for ensuring services and resources are available for students who are at risk. MTSP provides schools with guidance on ensuring these best practices are represented within district-level policies and protocols and that staff are trained in these protocols so they can apply them to real-world actions as they identify and support youth who are in need of mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention services. Additionally, EDC's optional Collaborative Safety Planning Training has been developed to provide 4 hours of training, role-plays, and group-

	based discussions focused specifically on providing students who are identified as at risk for suicide with Safety Plans that align with best practices and the local resources, capacity, and culture of schools. School staff participating in virtual or in-person Safety Planning training receive specialized content focused on safety planning within School Systems.
Tier 3: Establishing referral processes to ensure that school-aged youth in need of more intensive services can access school-based and/or community mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports and services	One of EDC's 6 key components of school suicide prevention is the development of policies and protocols for identifying and supporting youth who are at risk for suicide. MTSP provides schools with training on best practices for protocols. Districts are supported in developing referral processes from school to community-mental health providers, as well as developing protocols for reintegrating youth into the school community following a mental health related crisis. MTSP provides districts with direct education on strengthening referral processes within established protocols. In addition to the district education on protocol best practices, MTSP provides school districts with individual technical assistance on addressing their unique community environment, challenges, and resources within referral processes—as well as support on engaging in continuous quality improvement (CQI) to improve these referral processes and protocols over time.
Tier 3: Establishing a network of providers (in school and/or community) who can accept school-aged youth referrals for appropriate mental health, substance use, and co-occurring supports and services, including crisis response and stabilization	Two of EDC's 6 key components are engaging key school community members and identifying and supporting at risk youth. Together, these two components provide guidance to school districts on strengthening internal mental health staff understanding of their role in supporting youth at risk for suicide and other cooccurring issues such as substance use. Additionally, MTSP provides guidance on best practice interventions, such as collaborative safety planning, for supporting youth at risk for suicide and training and technical assistance to support districts in representing these internal supports and services within their suicide risk response policies and protocols. Additionally, one of EDC's 6 key components of school suicide prevention is the development of community partnerships. MTSP provides schools with direct training on strategies for identifying and strengthening relationships with community mental providers, considerations for establishing formal partnerships and referral processes, and guidance in maintaining sustainable partnerships that ensure students identified as at risk for suicide are consistently and effectively supported across grade levels.

#6. “1 month after the start of Year 2: Develop a plan to sustain the Project AWARE program that includes:

- *Identifying the desired outcomes and sustainable changes being made.*
- *Identifying any needed changes to current policies to support the Project AWARE project.*
- *Identifying any required financial resources, including State Medicaid funding.*
- *Identifying what is needed to maintain mental health, substance use and co-occurring services and supports for school-aged youth when federal funding ends.*

[The MTSP Framework](#) provides guidance to a state or region engaging in sustainability planning. [EDC's state or regional-level technical assistance](#) can be provided each year of the Project AWARE Grant to support the facilitation of partners' roles in planning, monitoring and evaluation of the grant project. During year 2 of the grant, this technical assistance can include the facilitation of 3-4 advisory board meetings and support in sustainability planning. EDC's technical assistance can help applicants more effectively convene state and/or regional partners and provide an effective structure for forming and maintaining an advisory board which informs the Project AWARE planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. EDC serves as a non-biased 3rd party supporting the facilitation of group discussions and decision-making across different sectors and settings within the advisory board.

Additionally, during the spring semester of school year 2 in MTSP, school teams create sustainability plans, laying out how they will sustain the 6 key components of school suicide prevention within their local communities. Within this sustainability plan, schools place special emphasis on identifying methods for sustaining policies and protocols for identifying and supporting youth at risk and responding after a suicide death. Likewise, schools retake the MTSP assessment as a precursor to sustainability planning to identify opportunities for growing, expanding, and increasing access to student life-skill development, mental health service, and other supports integral to MTSS. These school-district level sustainability plans can be used to directly inform and strengthen a state or regional level sustainability plan within Project AWARE, knowing ongoing adjustments, improvements and updates will be needed to this year 2 state or regional sustainability plan in years 3–5 of the grant.

#7. Develop an Initial Evaluation Plan: “Within 3 months after award and report progress annually in the Programmatic Progress Report (PPR)

Develop an initial evaluation plan for your project to improve project performance and increase understanding of the factors that contribute to the success of the program. This plan should include:

- *Proposed evaluation questions and design*
- *Data collection*
- *Report evaluation findings and recommendations*

[EDC’s MTSP School Suicide Prevention Assessment](#) provides a key data collection tool Project AWARE Grantees and school systems can use to gather both baseline and post-implementation data on suicide prevention strategies such as suicide risk screenings and assessments, safety planning practices, gatekeeper trainings, life-skill development, strengthening social-connectedness, community partnerships in supporting youth identified as at risk for suicide, and more. The tool provides a useful resource to help grantees monitor their school-based initiative impacts. EDC provides leadership in analyzing and interpreting the assessment data, including individualized TA for school districts on interpreting their results and the creation of an aggregate report which showcases needs, strengths, and opportunities for growth across all participating districts from pre to post MTSP implementation. Additionally, the MTSP assessment can be repeated 3-4 times over the lifetime of the Project AWARE Grant to show not just initial pre-post growth, but also long-term sustainability in school infrastructure and environments related to student mental health and suicide prevention.

As an optional add-on, EDC can support evaluation planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting activities related to implementation of the MTSP framework and broader Project Aware grant strategies. EDC’s evaluation services can support the development of practical systems for tracking implementation activities and outcomes across participating school districts-- including participation in trainings and Communities of Practice, implementation of suicide prevention protocols, delivery of professional development, and progress in

strengthening the 6 key components of school suicide prevention. EDC can support the identification of priority outcomes and appropriate measures to assess project impact, including changes in staff knowledge and preparedness, school climate and wellbeing indicators, referral and support practices, and other Project Aware-required performance measures. Evaluation activities may also include analysis and interpretation of MTSP assessment data, development of summary reports and data visualizations, and ongoing continuous quality improvement support to help guide project implementation and sustainability of efforts.

Relevant Allowable Activities

#1. “Assist teachers, school personnel, and partner organization personnel to develop skills that promote staff wellness, mental well-being, and resilience to support and refer school-aged youth with mental health, substance use or co-occurring concerns to needed services”

One of MTSP’s 6 key components is engaging key school community members in mental health promotion and suicide prevention efforts. Special content in MTSP’s environmental assessment, Community of Practice (CoP) Webinars, action planning, and technical assistance is focused on providing best practice and real-world strategies for promoting staff wellbeing within broader suicide prevention efforts. Districts are encouraged to incorporate steps within their MTSP action plans focused on building district capacity to support staff wellbeing—and individualized technical assistance is provided to districts to monitor and improve their efforts around staff wellbeing over time.

#4. “STANDUP Act only applies to SEAs, LEAs, or TEAs:

- *“Consult with stakeholders (e.g., principals, teachers, local Tribal officials, etc.) to establish and implement a school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training policy. The training policy shall include a plan to provide evidence-based, developmentally appropriate training to students in grades 6 through 12, in coordination with school-based mental health resources; and provide for periodic retraining of students. The training plan must address the following:*

- a. Suicide prevention education and awareness, including associated risk factors*
- b. Methods students can use to seek help*
- c. Student resources for suicide awareness and prevention*
- d. SEAs, LEAs, or TEAs must submit the training plan as **Attachment 10** to be considered for five additional points.”*

The implementation of MTSP and its [6 Key Components of School Suicide Prevention](#) can support Project AWARE Grantees in the creation of their student suicide awareness and prevention training policy and associated training plan. Grantees interested in rolling out MTSP with a cohort of school districts can collaborate with EDC during the creation of their grant application to create a full plan for rolling out assessments, policies, protocols, and trainings in collaboration with local school districts focused on suicide prevention.

EDC has model service descriptions for all MTSP activities and examples of mapping these out across school and federal grant years to aid in the development of the suicide prevention-specific plan *that must be included as attachment 10 to receive the additional 5 points in the grant application.*

Furthermore, two of MTSP’s 6 key components are the creation of policies and protocols for identifying and supporting youth at risk for suicide and responding after a suicide death. In addition to education and technical assistance in creating best practice policies and protocols on these topics, MTSP provides schools with guidance and support in providing professional development on policies and protocols, offering trainings on recognizing students at risk of suicide and linking this training content with developed protocols, and engaging in continuous quality improvement (CQI) around policies and protocols. Furthermore, guidance and technical assistance is provided to school districts on identifying key content on protocols to communicate with students and how to integrate trainings for students on mental health promotion and suicide prevention into school policies. MTSP’s emphasis on policy and protocol creation can aid any Project AWARE applicant looking to integrate suicide prevention within their grant applications and project activities.

5. “Consider the communities that will be affected by this project and engage them in the overall program planning. To do so, SAMHSA encourages applicants to:

- Engage communities, when practicable, during the design phase,*
- Develop programs in consultation with communities benefiting from or impacted by the program, and*
- Consider available data, evidence, and evaluation results from past programs to make every effort to extend eligibility requirements to all potential applicants.”*

One of EDC’s 6 key components is the engagement of key school community members.

Within this component, school districts are encouraged to actively engage families and youth in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of ongoing efforts to promote student wellbeing and prevent suicide. Districts are supported in identifying roles for families and youth to play within MTSP implementation teams, completion and review of MTSP assessments and action plans, and ongoing improvements to existing efforts.

Furthermore, districts are supported in identifying and facilitating student-led mental health and suicide prevention campaigns and events that are aligned with their local culture, resources, and context. If [EDC’s state or regional-level technical assistance is provided](#), focus can be placed on providing specific roles for families and youth to play in the Project AWARE Advisory Board throughout the lifetime of the project.

Data Collection, Performance Measurement, & Performance Assessment

“You must report program-specific data in SAMHSA’s Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) on a quarterly basis. The data collection and reporting tool and related guidance will be provided post-award....Recipients must collect and report data on the following indicators:

- 1. Number of new individuals reached with education and/or prevention on mental health, substance use, or suicide*
- 2. Number of individuals screened for mental health or related interventions, substance use, or suicidality*

3. *Number of individuals who screened positive for mental health or related interventions, substance use, or suicidality*
4. *Number of individuals referred for mental health or related services, substance use prevention and treatment services, or services for suicide risk, ideation, or behavior*
5. *Number of new individuals who received brief intervention for mental health or suicide prevention*
6. *The number of staff trained in mental health or related interventions or suicide prevention”*

EDC’s MTSP framework supports school systems in creating data collection and monitoring action plans that guide school systems in tracking all key data outcome measures above. MTSP TA supports school systems in identifying feasible strategies for tracking data and addressing data collection challenges. Schools’ implementation of their MTSP data action plans can support strong, long-term collection and reporting of required data directly by school systems beyond the two-year MTSP process. This allows schools to be partners with Project AWARE Grant evaluators in monitoring and showing impact.

As an optional add-on, EDC can directly support data collection, management, and reporting activities related to Project AWARE grant requirements, including SPARS reporting. EDC’s evaluation services can assist participating school districts and state agencies in developing practical systems for tracking and organizing required data elements, such as the number of individuals trained in suicide prevention, screened for suicide risk, referred for services, and connected to mental health supports following referral. EDC can provide guidance on identifying feasible data sources and collection procedures, strengthening data quality and consistency across participating sites, and developing processes for aggregating and interpreting project data for SPARS submission and ongoing grant monitoring. Evaluation support may additionally include development of data collection tools and templates, technical assistance related to reporting timelines and requirements, and the creation of summary reports and visualizations that help grantees communicate project progress, outcomes, and areas for continuous improvement.