

Enhancing the Center's Work: Summary of Needs Assessment (July, 2010)

During June 2010, we sent out the following request to the Center's Advisory Group and then to all on our email list:

We want to thank you for your participation with the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA and to invite you to help guide us as we make some improvements.

Below are two brief matters related to our mission as a policy and practice analysis center that your response can help us address. (If you don't have time to do this, just hit reply and return to let us know you want to stay connected.)

Based on your experiences and the work you do related to schools, we are particularly interested in additional ways our efforts can help you and ideas about new ways to move things forward.

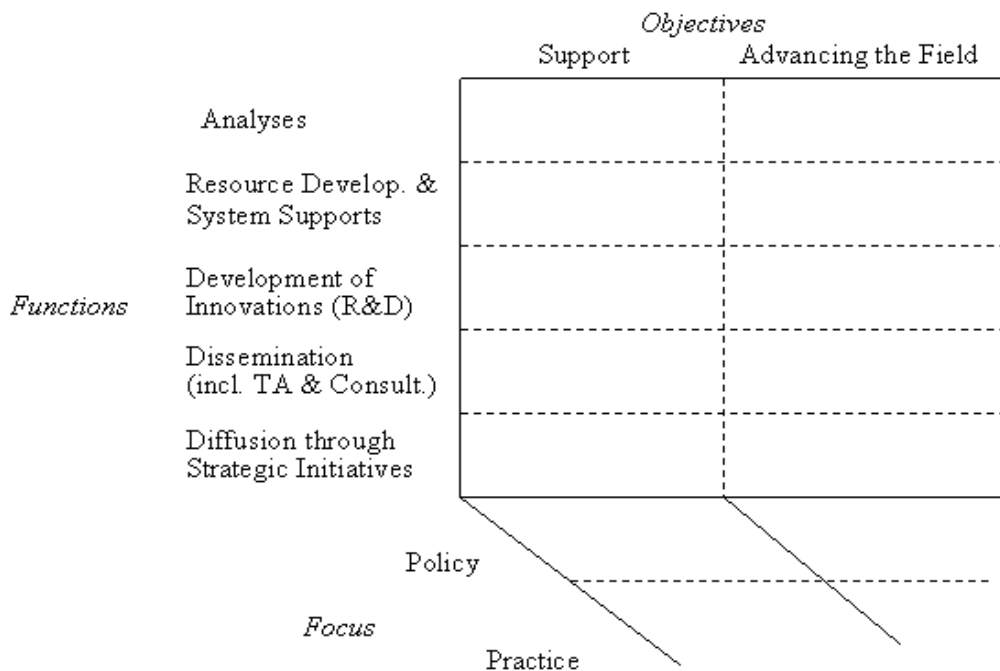
- (1) Topic focus -- Are there specific topics that need greater attention?
- (2) Advancing the field -- What more should we be doing to advance efforts for schools to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports with mental health matters fully integrated into this work?

Also, if you have any documents you can share related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports in your organization, we would be very interested.

We look forward to hearing from you.

We heard from the majority of Advisory Group. And a small good cross section of those on our general list. We were pleased that most of the responses provided ideas that were within our mission (see Exhibit below and the detailed description on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/aboutmh/about1.htm>).

Policy and Practice Analyses and Much More to Support and Advance the Field



IMPROVING WHAT EXISTS

In general, the responses focused mostly on wanting us to amass and develop more resources related to (a) specific problem areas, (b) practice/process matters, and (c) system concerns.

A. Specific Problems about Which Respondents Wanted More Resources

>Re: *mental health in schools* (e.g., resiliency and positive psychology; social and emotional learning; effective mental health screening and follow up; use of mental health supports to improve graduation rates)

>Re: *pervasive school wide student problems* (e.g., need school wide and district wide interventions that address the need to improve school cultures to engage students; early identification and intervention for students with school attendance problems; bullying both in person, via internet; how to address behavior problems before they escalate)

>Re: *students with special needs* (e.g., cultural competency; immigrant and English language learners needs; accommodations and the use of 504 plans; incarcerated youth; small classes with extra support; need more on young children with severe mental health problems)

>Re: *family involvement and support* (e.g., need for evidence based programs for family involvement in schools; depression in mothers/disruption at home)

>Re: *broader community and social concerns* (e.g., cultural concerns, gender issues, institutional racism; trauma and stressors related to the economy, wars, natural disasters; childhood trauma and it's impact)

>Re: *clarifying that specific problems overlap* (e.g., integrating health/MH/addictions; tying all risks/MH issues together for school staff to see the impact)

B. Practice/Process Matters

>Re: *general concerns for all students schoolwide* (e.g., school climate highlighting prosocial, risk prevention, health/MH promotion; a focus for high schools on nurturing students; making classrooms/schools family/community friendly; linking best practices with achievement)

>Re: *support for all students to succeed* (e.g., build on existing schools programs such as Response to Intervention; enhancing use of evidence based practices and their outcomes by integrating them into schools/districts; how to develop teachers who know ways to establish small groupings in order to provide more support to students who need it)

>Re: *special populations* (e.g., transition of high risk students from alternative schools; strengthen school attendance review board processes)

>Re: *integration of resources to provide support for all students* (e.g., focus on establishing a district wide steering group for learning supports; explore how school based and community based providers might account for each other better and combine resources and expertise)

C. System Concerns

>Re: *policy concerns* (e.g. linking to learning/mission of schools using evidence shows how learning supports leads to better outcomes; link to state mandates related to disproportionality and equity; continue analyses of national school improvement and specific state initiatives)

>Re: *leadership for learning supports* (e.g. strengthening the administrative skills of learning support leaders to align with system priorities; leadership development for facilitating system development)

>Re: *capacity building for school staff* (e.g., delineating training for school staff and leadership in learning supports; training that leads to agreement on practices that will improve climate and relationships; provide ongoing support and supervision; work around cuts in professional development by working in classrooms with teachers; work with staff in juvenile facilities; improving technology used for the work and professional development)

>Re: *resource allocation* (e.g., focusing on increasing resources/funding and how to deal with budget cuts to avoid losing learning support staff; identification of additional funding sources)

>Re: *data collection and accountability* (e. g. providing data on extent to which MH interventions have positively impacted student MH/achievement and how to do more to integrate relevant indicators into school monitoring systems; show link between attendance in primary grades to social/emotional issues and dropouts; show changes in outcomes when learning supports are reduced)

>Re: *integrating schools and community support networks* (e.g., clarifying best strategies in linking school and community, including overcoming barriers across disciplines; delineating community building activities; addressing school and community budget cuts; school personnel need more information on working with communities; community organizations as co-conveners; what parents and parent organization can do to advocate for development, implementation, and evaluation of learning supports)

ADVANCING THE FIELD

Ideas were shared with respect to the role the center should play in advancing the field. Some reflect work that is underway; some can be added; some are beyond the center's current capacity.

>Re: *building strategic collaborations* (e.g., work with school boards, associations for training/policy on learning supports in schools/districts/community; work with special education related groups and associations; integrate work of various Centers in theory and work with schools/districts; work with other national associations to increase momentum; work with charitable organizations for scale up and policy change; cross cutting collaborations and coordination across disciplines)

>Re: *networks for action* (e.g., develop regional hubs for the national initiative to disseminate knowledge, enhance leadership core; develop a cadre of "expert facilitators")

to work with states/districts/schools using well developed tools and protocols; use partner organizations strategically to disseminate materials/reports; work with related federal grant opportunities)

>Re: *research/outcomes for learning supports* (e.g., connect learning supports to measurement systems; need a well designed study or evaluation of learning supports for more outcome data to make the case; identify where learning supports are in schools/districts and how much it costs/saves; demonstration districts where the work is in place for others to see)

>Re: *sustaining and scale up* (e.g., work with state departments as they set the agenda; integrate mental health standards into the core curriculum of education; system change through school improvement; integrate learning supports into university training programs; new a legislative focus on learning supports; need strategic social marketing strategies with specific messages to specific audiences; brief well formatted user friendly products; focus on implementation science and how take good models to scale and sustain them; work with national champions)

IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTER'S WORK

Over the next few months, the implications from the feedback will be strategically incorporated into our current initiatives for advancing the field and will be immediately reflected in the Call to Action initiative related to the upcoming reauthorizations of both the ESEA and SAMHSA (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ninhome.htm>) .

With respect to specific to requests for more resources, we are bolstering our Online Clearinghouse by enhancing the Quick Finds related to the topics cited by respondents (including increased cross referencing) - for example:

- (a) Empirical Support for Mental Health in Schools
- (b) Empirical Support for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
- (c) Familial Problems (e.g., economic, psychological)
- (d) English Language Learners
- (e) Accommodating Differences and Disabilities
- (f) Screening Students for Problems
- (g) Multiple, Overlapping Student Problems