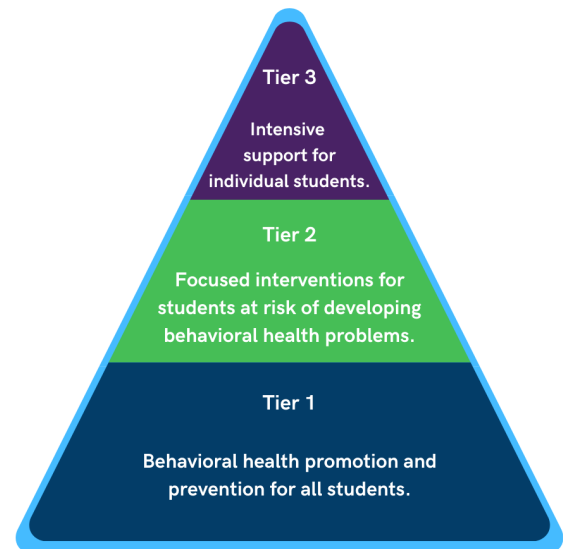




## DC's School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program Bridges Gap Between Students and Vital Services

### What is the School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program?

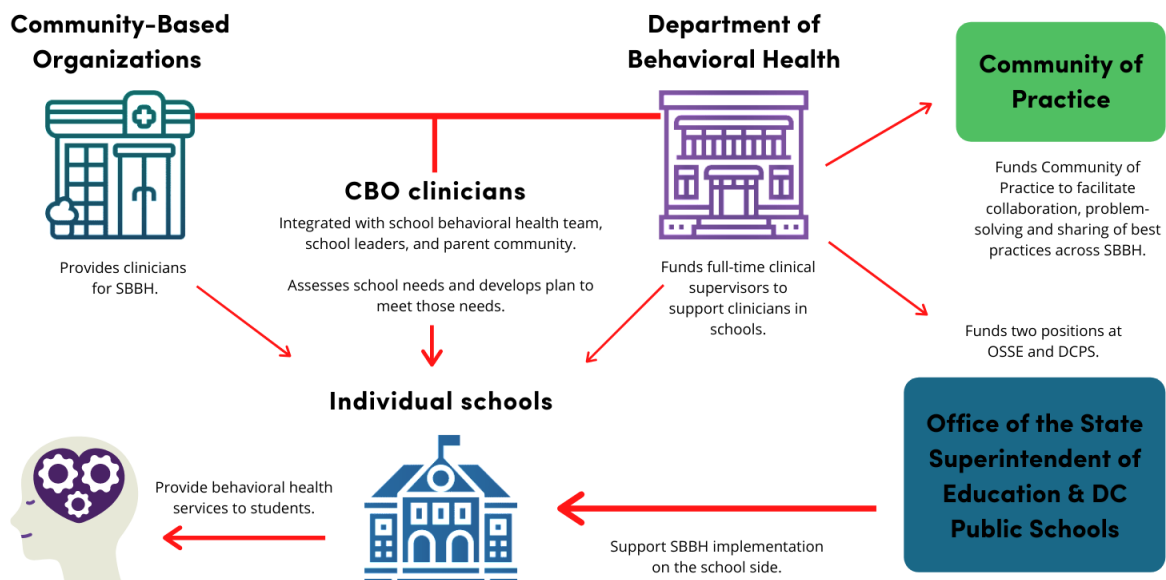
The School-Based Behavioral Health Expansion Program (SBBH) takes a public health approach to addressing children's mental and behavioral health. DC's Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) to place at least one full-time clinician in every DC Public School (DCPS) and public charter school. The goal of SBBH is to provide an array of behavioral health services at three different tiers of support that address school-wide, targeted, and intensive student behavioral health needs.



Thanks to the DC Council's leadership and historic investment in children's behavioral health in the District's Fiscal Year 2022 budget, the SBBH expansion program now includes all 251 DCPS and public charter schools – **and thousands more kids can access the critical services they need.**

### How Does SBBH Work?

SBBH relies on collaboration between key DC public health and education agencies, CBOs, and local schools. Through this interconnected system, SBBH clinicians can provide critical behavioral health services to all students in DC public schools – year-round and regardless of whether a student is learning remotely or in-person.



## Why Do We Need SBBH?

This fall, thousands of child behavioral health professionals and children's hospitals across the nation declared a national state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health amid skyrocketing rates of negative behavioral health outcomes – such as depression, anxiety, and grief – induced by the physical, mental, social, and emotional toll of the pandemic. Black and brown children and children from low-income families, who already had far worse behavioral health outcomes prior to the pandemic, are especially vulnerable – as are their families and broader communities. Given that students spend most of their time in school, SBBH is one of DC's best tools for improving student access to behavioral health care.

## Access to SBBH Has Led to Better Student Outcomes

As SBBH is fully expanded to all DC public schools this fiscal year, we value the positive feedback provided by clinicians so far – as well as their demonstrated impact on the well-being of District children and families:

- **From Victoria Isola, Simon Elementary School (Ward 8)**

I started working with a student in January 2020. He had a hard time expressing what was bothering him and would shut down and start crying. We have been working on learning emotions, self-regulation, coping skills, using 'I' statements, brainstorming solutions and picking the best solution for conflicts. He has made great improvement in our sessions, in school, and at home. His mom reported that he is able to tell her what is bothering him without shutting down and crying. We had our last session on October 28<sup>th</sup>, and he expressed that he was excited and proud of himself!

- **From Molly Zinkgraf, Jefferson Middle School Academy (Ward 6)**

A student was referred to me during the pandemic due to lack of engagement in school, sleeping most of the day, and reports of anger toward family members in response to his father's incarceration. I supported the student in developing coping tools to help with difficult emotions during the pandemic. He was discharged in October due to his progress and meeting his treatment goals. Today, the student is a member of the football team, receives multiple positive referrals from teachers, and is on track for the honor roll. He reports feeling excited about applying to high school and continuing to play football.

- **From Ta-Tanisha Hawkins, Patterson Elementary School (Ward 8)**

Patterson successfully started off this new in-person learning with a bang. The behavioral health team conducted our first in-parent meeting of the 2021-22 school year. Due to new school safety protocols, we improvised outside and had ten parents and school staff members in attendance. The focus was to engage parents to provide them support in adjusting to this new normal of staying connected with the school and their student's teacher. September was also suicide prevention month, and parents were provided psychoeducation on how to identify signs and symptoms of distress, anxiety, and sadness in their children, as well as how to talk to their kids about managing their strong emotions and how to and who to seek out for help.

We urge the Mayor and the Council to continue providing the essential funding needed to fully realize SBBH's benefits – and to ensure that critical behavioral health services are accessible to thousands of DC children and families now and in the years to come.

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