



## What You Need to Know:

- One in five children in DC have a mental health disorder, and half of our students have had at least one traumatic experience.
- Trauma-informed training, restorative practices, and teaching socio-emotional skills are proven solutions to support students with mental health issues.
- Program resources and additional mental health staff come with a large cost but are needed to transform school environments.

## Why Are Mental Health Supports Important?

When students come to school, they bring their whole selves into the classroom. If students' basic needs are not met or they are dealing with trauma or mental health issues, their ability to learn is limited. **Right now, approximately one in five children in DC meet the criteria for a mental health disorder.** The stresses of living in an urban environment or living in poverty take an additional toll on children and their brain development. **Alarmingly, almost half of students in DC have had at least one traumatic experience, and 22 percent have experienced more than one.** Students of color, who make up the majority of youth in the District, are even more likely to experience trauma.

Fortunately, these issues are treatable and with appropriate support and resources, all of our students can learn and grow in a nurturing and positive school environment. **Every student deserves access to trauma-informed school staff, mental health professionals, and a school culture that teaches and allows students to be their best selves.**

## What is Trauma-Informed Training?

Trauma-informed training ensures school staff are prepared to recognize and respond to students who are impacted by traumatic stress. **The goal is to shift mindsets of adults in schools so that they more deeply understand how trauma can impact brain development and behavior and then provide strategies and structures to help support students.** Many trauma-informed professionals have noted that these ideas and practices have also been hugely beneficial for working with adults in the school as well as parents, many of whom have experienced trauma themselves.

## Components of Trauma-Informed Care



Substance Abuse for Mental Health Services Administration, 2014

When implemented correctly and across the whole school, this training can lead to increased academic outcomes, improved school culture, and reduction in school dropouts. **Especially with the high rates of trauma in DC, trauma-informed training is critical to help support our students and should be offered in every DC public school.**



## How Can We Make Schools a Positive Place for All Kids?

Students with mental health issues deserve a school environment where all kids are given the tools they need to learn, regulate their emotions, and build relationships. **Two proven models that foster such an environment and teach essential socio-emotional skills are restorative practices and Positive Behavioral Interventions in Schools (PBIS).**

- **Restorative practices** give students a safe space to express their emotions and build a sense of community. Rather than focus on punishment when problems occur, trained staff facilitate mediation conversations about how to move forward and repair harm.
- **PBIS** focuses on teaching students clear expectations of good behavior and provides examples and strategies to help meet those expectations. Each of the lessons are complimented with positive reinforcement to motivate students to do their best.

While these preventative measures help support most students in schools, our more vulnerable students may require more intensive, professional support. Many schools have mental health professionals providing services, but their caseloads may be very large, or they may have to split time between multiple schools. **Additional school-based mental health professionals would better ensure access to services for our students who need it most.**

## What is Needed to Improve Mental Health Supports?

Below are estimated costs for needed supports in schools:

Position/Program	Estimated Cost
Additional Mental Health Professional (School Counselor, Social Worker, or School Psychiatrist)	\$104,633
Restorative Practice and Trauma-Informed Training	\$37,500+
PBIS Program	\$4,633

**These programs are even more critical after the passing of the Student Fair Access to School Act (SFASA)—a law that puts limitations on a school’s ability to suspend students without including adequate additional resources in school. To address root causes of behavior and help students learn to do better, we must increase mental health supports in schools.**

## How Can Parents Get Involved?

- Testify at a **public hearing** to call for increased mental health supports and trauma-informed training in all schools
- Contact the **Mayor and your Councilmember** to advocate to let them know this issue is a priority
- Contact PAVE’s **community organizing team** at [organizers@dcpave.org](mailto:organizers@dcpave.org) for more information

### Learn More:

- ❖ *Read about how schools across the country approach supporting students’ mental health: <https://n.pr/2KM6v6i>*
- ❖ *For more information on trauma informed schools, read this extensive report from the Education Law Center: <https://bit.ly/2j5Keng>*