



Connecting Schools to Care IV Students: School Mental Health Resource and Support Guide

connectingtocarect.org
plan4children.org

Partner Organizations



Table of Contents

Overview of the System of Care	3
Connecticut’s System of Care	4
Strengthening Schools as a Component of the System of Care.....	5
Resources to Help Navigate CT’s System of Care	6
Resources to Help Empower Youth and Families	8
How to Get Involved!	11
Students Supporting Students Peer Support Program.....	12
Resources to Integrate Equity in Schools.....	13

Overview of the System of Care

A System of Care (SOC) is a variety of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with/or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families. These services should be organized into a coordinated network, build meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and address cultural and linguistic needs, to help youth and families function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout the lifespan.

Systems of Care are...



The SOC approach encompasses an array of child-serving services and supports which includes **school mental health, individual therapy, medication therapy, inpatient psychiatric services**, and **residential treatment**, while also integrating a broader array of services and supports for children, youth, and young adults with serious emotional disturbances (SED) and their families. From what we know about youth and families struggling with SED, no one case is the same. The system of care works to develop a “no wrong door” approach to service delivery, which empowers individuals to make informed decisions, to exercise control over their long-term care needs, and to achieve their personal goals and preferences.

Connecticut's System of Care



Following the Newtown tragedy in 2012, Connecticut began working to better integrate care coordination efforts across the state. This tragedy highlighted a need to expand our infrastructure and service delivery system in Connecticut through expansion and integration of **trauma-informed comprehensive school mental health supports** with the existing **community-based network of care**.

One way we've accomplished this task is through the Connecting to Care grants! Since 2013, these grants have focused on integrating silos and creating linkages between systems that serve and support children, youth, and families including (but not limited to) early childhood, child welfare, behavioral health, primary care, education, and juvenile justice. The goal of Connecting to Care is to blend and integrate all child-serving systems into a Network of Care which will equally and effectively serve all children and families. The recently awarded grant, **Connecting Schools to Care IV Students Initiative (Connecting to Care)** will offer additional support to schools through expansion and integration of trauma-informed comprehensive school mental health supports with the existing community-based network of care.

Strengthening Schools as a Component of the System of Care

In the spirit of strengthening our SOC, The Department of Children and Families (DCF), in partnership with The Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI), Carelon Behavioral Health, FAVOR, and The Consultation Center at Yale, is eager to work alongside Connecticut School Districts through **Connecting to Care**.

The goals of this work are as follows:

- Strengthen school's internal capacity to access community-behavioral health resources for children and families
- Strengthening school and family connections to the local service array in your region
- Empower youth and families to be a part of the system of care in collaboration with their child's school team
- Implement and sustain equitable comprehensive school mental health supports

Connecticut has a very robust SOC to support youth and their families in accessing appropriate behavioral health care. Given the amount services regionally and statewide and to help schools, youth, and families increase their awareness of these services, we've put together this toolkit for all 206 school districts across the state of Connecticut. This guide can serve as a resource for your school district should you encounter a student in need of behavioral health supports, and you are not quite sure where to start.

For more information/how to get involved in Connecting to Care,
please see our flyer attached at the end of this toolkit.
We look forward to "CONNECTing" with you!

Resources to Help Navigate CT's System of Care

Various resources are available online to assist connecting families and youth to appropriate mental health treatment and supports in CT. While not exhaustive, the following resources may be of assistance to school staff, families, and caregivers.

Children's Mental Health Resource Lists *by Region and Multiple Languages*

To ensure that children and youth are connected to the care they need, regional lists of community-based supports and services are available. These lists include mental health evaluation and treatment resources along with related supports and services. **These lists include community-based care coordination.**

Resource lists:

<https://www.connectingtocarect.org/supports-services/find-services/>

Community-based care coordination:

<https://www.connectingtocarect.org/supports-services/wrapct/care-coordination/>

Connect4Families Toolkit

Simplifying access to behavioral health services and facilitating collaboration among families, providers, and schools. This includes tips from Parents/Caregivers and Youth for Pediatric, Behavioral Health and School Practitioners.

Where to find it? <https://plan4children.org/resources/toolkit/>

Other Key Resources:

- Crisis Resources for Children, Youth and Families

[988](#)

[Urgent Crisis Centers](#)

[Mobile Crisis](#)

- [Youth Substance Use Intervention Services](#)
- [AIM tool](#) - This tool will guide you through a series of questions to help you find services well-matched to the specific behavioral health needs of a child (mental health and/or substance use) or parent-focused services to promote child wellbeing.

Carelon Behavioral Health, Child and Family Division Resources

The Carelon Behavioral Health, Child and Family Division is your first point of contact for connection to mental health, substance use, and parenting services in CT. As such, Carelon BH CT connects families to the range of existing community programs and services needed to build a youth and family-driven, trauma-informed, resilience-focused system of care.

For all programs within the Child and Family Division, more information can be found at: <https://www.carelonbh.com/ctcfd/en/home>

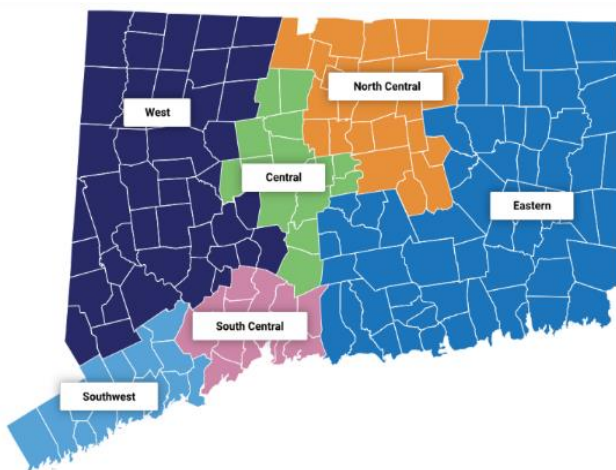
Additional information and support for HUSKY members can be found at: www.ctbhp.com

Community Pathways: Select [here](#) for more information.

What is it? A warm line to help connect families with children up to age 18 who want to receive in-home services to help with a mental health and/or substance use, and parenting need. This is a non-emergency line. For all families, regardless of insurance.

How Do I get It? Between 8:30am-5:00pm, M-F, dial [877-381-4193](tel:877-381-4193), option 1 to connect to effective parenting, mental health, and substance-use programs and community-based supports or email a [referral form](#) to CPathways@carelon.com or Fax it to 860-707-1003

Connect with your Network of Care (NOC) Manager to support navigating the system



Region	NOC Managers
1. Southwest	Mai Kader (mai.kader@carelon.com)
2. Southcentral	Mikhela Hull (mikhela.hull@carelon.com)
3. Eastern	Drew Lavallee (andrew.lavallee@carelon.com)
4. Northcentral	Lisa Palazzo (lisa.palazzo@carelon.com)
5. Western	Jules Calabro (julie.calabro@carelon.com)
6. Central	Stephanie Joanis (stephanie.joanis@carelon.com)

Resources to Help Empower Youth and Families

FAVOR

FAVOR is a statewide family-led, nonprofit organization that is committed to empowering families as advocates and partners in improving educational and health outcomes for our children. FAVOR offers a single place for families with children who have medical, mental, emotional, and behavioral health challenges to find information, assistance and training.

FAVOR offers the following trainings for families:

- The **FAVOR Family Peer Support Program** provides direct peer support services to families with children who have medical, mental, or behavioral health challenges to **empower and help them** participate fully in the development of their child's care planning and implementation. Family Peer Support Specialists assist families who need to navigate the special education and mental health care service systems. Services can include education on caregiver and child rights and responsibilities and attending meetings – e.g., planning and placement team (PPT) meetings – with families.

For more information regarding our family peer support program and how to access it, scan the QR code below!

A family or provider can submit a referral directly via our website using the link below

<https://forms.office.com/r/PBeiuxJsZx>



- **FAVOR's Learning & Leadership Academy** is a learning collaborative designed to provide an infrastructure to guide and mentor youth and family champions interested in developing their leadership and peer support skills.



Trainings offered

are as follows:

- **How To Be Your Child's Best Advocate**
- **Agents of Change**
- **CONNECTing Youth**
- **Understanding Your Child's IEP**
- **Support Group Facilitation Training**
- **Redefining Self Care**
- **Persuasive Storytelling**
- **What's Your Story?**

For more information on how to register for these trainings, please visit [FAVOR's website](#), or reach out directly to your region's Family Systems Manager or Family Peer Support Specialist (see contact information below.)

Region	Family Systems Managers	Family Peer Support Specialists
1. Southwest	Keisha Martin-Velez (kmartin-velez@favor-ct.org)	Renee Wright (rwright@favor-ct.org) Louarna Kalten (lkalten@favor-ct.org)
2. Southcentral	Kristin Graham (kgraham@favor-ct.org)	Amy Hilario (ahilario@favor-ct.org)
3. Eastern	Lisa Girard (lgirard@favor-ct.org)	Shannon Ozkan (sozkan@favor-ct.org)
4. Northcentral	Paul Guerrero (pguerrero@favor-ct.org)	Maria Soto (msoto@favor-ct.org)
5. Western	Patricia Gaylord (pgaylord@favor-ct.org)	Coreen Herman (cherman@favor-ct.org) Zosh Flammia (zflammia@favor-ct.org)
6. Central	Dreau Foster (dfoster@favor-ct.org)	Lynda Bolton (lbolton@favor-ct.org)

How to Get Involved!

If you're interested in receiving technical assistance and support in how to utilize these resources, **Connecting to Care** is currently recruiting K-12 schools and districts across Connecticut to participate.

The purpose of **Connecting to Care** is to build schools' capacity to access and utilize community-based behavioral health resources and supports while strengthening their trauma-informed mental health programming. In turn, districts can effectively and equitably support student's behavioral health.

Schools offer a **familiar, accessible, and less stigmatizing** environment to seek help. CSMH initiatives are effective at improving student outcomes, including:

- Academic performance
- Fewer special education referrals
- Less need for restrictive placements
- Greater engagement and connectedness
- Decreased disciplinary actions
- Higher graduation rates ¹

CSMH systems provide a full array of supports and services that promote a positive school climate, social-emotional learning, mental health, and well-being and linkages to regional and statewide services and supports while reducing the prevalence and severity of mental illness.² This initiative is offered at no cost to your district and includes free training, technical assistance, evaluation, and support.

In addition to the resources described above, please check out other supports your school will have access to as part of your participation in Connecting to Care. For more information and to get in contact with someone from CHDI, please reach out to: Sarah White | swhite@chdi.org

¹ [Child Health and Development Institute](#)

² [National Center for School Mental Health](#)

Students Supporting Students Peer Support Program

The **Students Supporting Students Peer Support Program** aims to train middle and high school students to become part of a peer support team with the help of trusted adults in the school setting.

As a peer team member, students will receive training to recognize mental health signs and symptoms in their peers, reduce the stigma around asking for help, and encourage help seeking to a trusted adult within the school.

Peer teams will implement student-designed activities throughout the year that provide education to other students about behavioral health, normalize having conversations around mental health to reduce stigma, and promote help-seeking when someone needs support.



Benefits:

- We know that **adolescents are already having conversations in school about their mental health and well-being with their peers** – this program aims to train students to provide accurate and supportive information to help students have these conversations more effectively and encourage help-seeking to a trusted adult in the school setting.
- All activities implemented throughout the year will be **created BY students FOR students** (with the guidance of an adult advisor), thus providing students with leadership skills.
- Similar programs have found **positive impacts** on the well-being (e.g., increases in mental health knowledge and self-esteem) of both the students receiving the peer supports and those serving on the peer team.

Resources to Integrate Equity in Schools (CLAS Standards)

CLAS Tips for Schools

To provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to all students, schools can apply Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards (CLAS) to meet **the health and academic learning needs of an extraordinary diverse student body**. This document provides an **overview of the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services** in Health and Health Care, discusses their **relevance and applications to schools**, and encourages their use in **Connecticut schools**.

Please follow this link to find CLAS tips for schools!

<https://www.connectingtocarect.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CLAS-Tips-for-Schools-final-3.8.24.pdf>

Additional information, tools, and support on the statewide implementation of CLAS can be found [Health Equity | Behavioral Health Services | Connecting to Care \(connectingtocarect.org\)](#)



CLAS Toolkit

This toolkit offers a more in depth look at **the history of Connecting to Care in CT** and how this initiative is connected to **advancing health equity and racial justice in children's behavioral health**. The toolkit supports child-serving organizations with developing organizational Health Equity Plans, based on the National CLAS Standards, to **advance health equity and to reduce racial injustice and health disparities within their organizations, services, and communities in CT**.

Please follow this link to access the CLAS Toolkit!:

<https://www.connectingtocarect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CLAS-Toolkit-Updated.pdf>



Are you a school or district in Connecticut looking to enhance behavioral health supports for students?

CONNECTing Schools to Care IV Students is a federally-funded initiative focused on expanding and sustaining the state's behavioral health system for children through expansion of trauma-informed comprehensive school mental health supports, ensuring youth are linked to equitable and appropriate services and supports.

Outcome Goals for Participating Schools



Strengthen **integration** between school- and community-based behavioral health network of care



Increase staff and family **knowledge** of behavioral health and available services



Increase **capacity** to access and utilize behavioral health resources and supports



Implement equitable and comprehensive **school mental health** supports



Learn how you can **receive free technical assistance, implementation support, and an incentive** for building and enhancing school mental health supports and collaborating with community-based services!



Build and strengthen your school's behavioral health supports and connect with community-based services



Schools or districts who are interested in participating in this multi-year opportunity can apply to participate at three different levels, based on their need and capacity.

What can schools expect from participating?

Level 1 schools will receive:

- A School Mental Health Needs Assessment (SHAPE)
- SHAPE Results Review
- Training for school staff, youth, and families in Community Behavioral Health Supports, Trauma-Informed Practices, and Educational Equity
- Training for parents/caregivers in FAVOR's Learning and Leadership Academy and the Family Peer Support Program

Level 2 schools will receive:

- All Level 1 components
- An implementation plan with unique goals based on SHAPE results review
- Access to participate in regional learning communities
- Technical assistance and support to establish educational safe spaces in schools and implement school climate activities

Level 3 schools will receive:

- All Level 1 and 2 components
- Monthly technical assistance and support to help with implementation plan
- Quality improvement and evaluation support
- Technical assistance and support to implement behavioral health screening
- Technical assistance and support to implement a student peer support program (for middle and high school students only)



If you are interested in applying to participate, please contact: Sarah White | swhite@chdi.org

CHDI serves as the Coordinating Center and technical assistance provider for Connecting Schools to Care IV Students



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Partner Organizations

