STEP 1: CONDUCTING THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Overview of the Needs Assessment Process

The process for conducting the needs assessment must be a collaborative effort between all project partners at the community level not just limited to those who are official members of the Community Management Team (CMT) and should take the following steps as part of the process:

1. Compile data on the **RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS** related to one or more of the **five focus areas:**
   - Early Learning
   - Promoting Mental, Emotional & Behavioral Health
   - Family & Youth Engagement
   - Prevention
   - School Culture & Climate

   Risk factors are measurable characteristics that can be associated with a negative problematic outcome. Risk factors can occur on multiple levels, including biological, psychological, family, community, and cultural levels. Examples of risk factors primarily linked with children, youth, schools and communities: Bullying, academic failure, aggressive antisocial behavior, school and neighborhood violence and crime, trauma such as child abuse & neglect, living in poverty or living in high poverty neighborhoods, alcohol and drug abuse witnessing of or abusing drugs and alcohol.

   Protective factors are resources within the individual, family or community that are associated with a lower likelihood of negative problematic outcomes. They reduce the negative impact of a risk factor. Related to protective factors are assets. An asset is a useful or valuable quality, person, or thing; an advantage or resource. Examples of assets include: Civic and business associations, cultural and faith based organizations, public schools, libraries, parks and recreation, social service agencies, fire and police departments. Examples of protective factors: Positive and supportive relationships with peers, adults, and family, adequate social supports, access to mentors, access to a quality education, supports for early learning, feel safe in the neighborhood and at school.

2. Define the **TARGET AND SUB-POPULATIONS**

   Target populations refer to a those groups within your student body who have historically been flagged based on need. Sub-population refers to racial and ethnic minorities within the target population, but may also describe populations based on gender, sexual orientation, geographic location or socio-economic status. In the context of the needs assessment, target populations and sub-populations should be included according to the existing resource or service. Examples of Target & Sub-Populations:

   - Children with disabilities
   - Children who are considered homeless
   - Children who are living near, on, or below the poverty level
   - Children who are involved with DCYF
   - Children who are English Language Learners (including Refugee populations and New Americans)
   - Children whose parent(s) are incarcerated
   - Youth and families who experience substance misuse issues

3. Select at least one **SHARED INDICATOR** for each focus area
   Indicators are also known as performance objectives, performance targets, or objectives. Indicators are powerful tools for monitoring and communicating critical information about state and community populations. Indicators are used to support planning for identified priorities; developing and targeting of resources; identifying benchmarks and tracking progress toward state and community objectives; building awareness of problems and trends; informing policy and policy makers; and promoting accountability among governmental and nongovernmental agencies. Data are either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data sources are numbers, rates, and statistics and include both primary and secondary sources. Qualitative data refer to information gathered through focus groups, interviews, and observations. See a list of potential shared indicators below:

INCREASE

- Children enrolled in early childhood education
- Children entering Kindergarten and 1st grade who possess necessary social/emotional skills
- Students who received school-based mental health services
- Mental health service referrals for students which resulted in mental services
- Opportunities for caregivers/family to be involved in school
- Families who feel positively engaged
- Students who feel positively engaged/connected
- Teachers and staff who report feeling safe at school

DECREASE

- Office Discipline Referrals
- In- and out-of-school suspensions
- DCYF involvement
- Juvenile justice involvement
- Students who report using alcohol or other drugs in the past 30 days
- Students who report ever using alcohol or other drugs
- Students who reported being in a physical fight
- Students who did not go to school because they felt unsafe

4. Locate **DATA SOURCES** for each of the indicators
   Identifying the Data Sources for the Shared Indicators Data are either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data sources are numbers, rates, and statistics and include both primary and secondary sources. Qualitative data refer to information gathered through focus groups, interviews, and observations. In conducting the needs assessment, the data source must be tied to the selected indicator. A data source for each of the shared indicators must be identified. As an example, a good data source tied to indicators on adolescent substance use would be the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS) survey. See Appendix D for a list of recommended data sources. See GUIDANCE: Potential Data Source Sheet.

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