



## Student Support Personnel Issue Brief

### **Background**

Approximately 16% of North Carolina children ages two to seventeen have one or more emotional, behavioral, mental, or developmental conditions.<sup>1</sup> Mental health issues that affect students include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse, self-harm, suicide and violence.<sup>2</sup> Less than half of children affected by these conditions have received mental health treatment or therapy within the past year. Additionally, roughly 30% of North Carolina students do not have adequate health insurance that provides treatment specific to their needs, and those living in poverty are the most vulnerable.<sup>3</sup>

In an effort to combat the lack of necessary health treatment for students struggling with any of the previously-mentioned conditions, Whole Child NC was established in 2015. As an advisory committee to the State Board of Education, Whole Child NC analyzes the strong correlation between students' physical and mental health and their academic performance. The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model was created to demonstrate the need for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) in addressing the various non-academic problems that affect student outcomes. Each SISP possesses a different role that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- *School counselor* – aids students, families, and staff (individually or in groups) in areas related to academics, career development, social and emotional health, and crisis intervention;
- *School nurse* – provides screenings, assessments, interventions, health care plans, counsel, and oversight of physical and mental health issues to students, families, and staff;
- *School psychologist* – conducts evaluations and analysis of academic and behavioral needs of students, develops effective disciplinary practices for the majority of and individual groups of students, and consults families and staff on behavioral and emotional health needs of students;
- *School social worker* – focuses on eliminating barriers to learning, provides intervention for and prevention of school disruptions or violence, and addresses students' needs

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<sup>1</sup> “North Carolina Mental and Emotional Well-Being Profile from the National Survey of Children’s Health,” Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health. <http://childhealthdata.org/browse/archive-prior-year-nsch-and-ns-cshcn-data-resources/nsch-profiles/mental-health?geo=35>

<sup>2</sup> Mark Benton, “Improving Mental Health Services in Schools,” Department of Health and Human Services, April 9, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> “North Carolina Mental and Emotional Well-Being Profile from the National Survey of Children’s Health.”

according to their research-based knowledge of the link between home, school, and community.<sup>4</sup>

The House Select Committee on School Safety was created after the February 2018 school shooting in Parkland, FL. Members of the committee worked with educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and local governments and school systems to improve the safety and health of North Carolina students.<sup>5</sup> During the 2017-18 legislative session, State legislators filed bills like [House Bill 285](#), with the goal of training teachers on various issues related to mental and emotional health. Instead, the House Select Committee recommended alignment of North Carolina SISP to student ratios with nationally recommended ratios. Members found that although support personnel are an important component to the social, emotional, mental, and physical health of students, North Carolina schools are not providing the adequate ratio of SISP to student.

	<b>Nationally Recommended Ratio</b>	<b>North Carolina Ratio</b>	<b>Cost to Reach Recommended Ratio</b>
<i>School Counselors</i>	1 : 250	1 : 350	\$151.6 million
<i>School Nurses</i>	1 : 750	1 : 2,315	\$56.9 million
<i>Schools Psychologists</i>	1 : 700	1 : 1,857	\$110.4 million
<i>School Social Workers</i>	1 : 400	1 : 1,427 <sup>6</sup>	\$210.9 million <sup>7</sup>

## **NCSBA Position**

NCSBA believes that it is critical to properly staff public schools with the necessary support structure for the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students. The General Assembly should provide sufficient allotments to meet the nationally recommended staff to student ratios for these positions.

<sup>4</sup> “Student Access to A Sound, Basic Education: A Whole Child Approach.”

[https://files.nc.gov/governor/SISP\\_Overview.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/governor/SISP_Overview.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Leslie, Laura, “Moore to create school safety committee”, WRAL News, February 16, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> House Select Committee on School Safety, *Interim Report to the 2018 Session of the 2017 General Assembly of North Carolina*, May 2018.

<sup>7</sup> FRD and NCDPI, *School Safety Personnel Summary*, April 2018,

<https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/House2017-190/Student%20Health%20Working%20Group/4-2318%20Meeting/Information%20Requests/School%20Safety%20Personnel%20Summary.pdf>