



Creating Affirming, Responsive, and Equitable Schools (CARES)

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

2024



**National
Black Women's
Justice Institute**

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Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Black Girls in Schools

There is a need for schools to prioritize the mental health of Black girls. The mental health crisis among young people in the United States, particularly Black girls, is worsening, with high levels of persistent sadness and hopelessness exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic¹. Black children, girls, and LGBTQ+ students are disproportionately affected, with a significant increase in reported feelings of sadness and hopelessness over the past decade². Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for U.S. children ages 10-19, with Black girls facing a particularly high risk, as evidenced by elevated rates of suicide attempts, compared to their peers¹. Between 1991 and 2017, suicide attempts by Black youth increased, while suicide attempts among youth of other races and ethnicities decreased. Suicide death rates for Black teenage girls increased by 182% from 2001 to 2017³. Unique stress factors, including disproportionate family responsibilities and discrimination based on race and gender, contribute to their heightened risk⁴, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems tailored to Black girls' needs and experiences.



Why we created the CARES Mental Health System Assessment Tool

Current school-based assessment tools do not accurately gauge the extent to which schools address Black girls' and gender expansive young people's mental health and wellness needs. Although existing tools recommend comprehensive school-based mental health systems (CSMHS), they do not have an intersectional lens that can respond to the unique ways that gender, race, and other identities shape young people's mental health and help-seeking behaviors. The CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool helps schools understand how the mental health policies, practices, and programs they have in place contribute to the emotional well-being of their students, particularly Black girls, and offers a roadmap for creating a school-based mental health system responsive to all students across social identities.



How we created CARES Mental Health System Assessment Tool

The CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool incorporates insights from Black girls to establish comprehensive mental health systems responsive to needs of Black girls and gender-expansive youth. By prioritizing the experiences of Black girls, the CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool aids schools with implementing policies, practices, and programs that are attuned to the mental health and emotional well-being of all students. To develop the CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool, NBWJI examined existing frameworks, interventions, and assessment tools related to school-based mental health systems. We engaged two advisory councils: one involving Black girls ages 12-19 and the other consisting of professional subject matter experts.

- **Youth Involvement:** Over a 9-month period, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) actively participated in discussions with the NBWJI team, sharing their experiences and providing invaluable recommendations for enhancing school policies, services, and practices. Additionally, they offered feedback on the CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness.
- **Community Engagement:** NBWJI conducted listening sessions with Black girls to ensure the CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool reflects critical issues facing Black girls in school. Listening session participants engaged in discussions with the NBWJI team to learn directly from Black girls about their experiences, insights, and recommendations for how schools can improve their policies and practices to best support their mental health and wellness.
- **Expert Advisors:** The advisory committee of subject matter experts included Black women in school administration, mental health, and community services. They shared their professional expertise and reviewed the CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool to ensure it meets professional standards.

Using This Tool

CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool is divided into six sections, one for each component of the comprehensive school mental health system: (1) Teaming; (2) Needs Assessment and Resource Mapping; (3) Multi-Tiered System of Supports; (4) Mental Health Screening and Referral; Pathways; (5) Funding and Sustainability; and (6) Data and Impact. Each section offers a brief synopsis of what the domain is and why it's important based on insights from subject matter experts, Black girls, and the research literature on effective and promising practice. The synopsis is followed by instructions to complete a set of quality assessment indicators specific to that domain. Each section also includes reflection questions, suggested reading, and resources to build capacity in that domain.



How to take this assessment

Prepare

- Identify 3 to 8 individuals within your school community to make up the wellness team responsible for undergoing this assessment process. The wellness team can be an existing team, or you can identify a new team. A diverse array of perspectives will make for a more robust assessment, subsequent planning, and successful implementation. School-employed team members well-positioned to provide insight into organizational capacity include school administrators, school mental health staff (e.g., school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors), school health staff (e.g., school nurses), and teachers. Community-employed volunteers and partners, students, and caregivers/families can also provide a valuable perspective on all or sections of this assessment tool.
- Resource on building your wellness team: Check out chapter 1 (pp. 21-22) of [School Mental Health Referral Pathways Toolkit](#) for guidance on establishing a wellness team (also referred to as a [school mental health team](#) or problem-solving team).
- Set a deadline for team members to complete the assessment individually and schedule a meeting to debrief your results and reflections, including any differences of opinion and areas where team members' responses diverge.

Assess

- Each section includes a set of assessment statements or questions. Read the prompts and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement about how well you think your school is performing in the indicated domain on a scale from 0 (“unsure”), 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 6 (“Strongly Agree”). If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more information about mental health at school when you come together to discuss the results.
- Tally the total score of each domain by summing the responses you selected for the statements, then calculate the average score of each domain by dividing the total score by the number of assessment statements in the domain.

Reflect

- Answer the reflection questions that follow each assessment to further reflect on the practices that your school currently employs and what you can potentially do differently.
- Discuss your conclusions with the larger wellness team. It is encouraged for you and your wellness team to dig into any areas of disagreement, seeking to understand and address differences of opinion.

Plan

- Complete the [scoring rubric](#). Identify the domains where your school is strongest, where you have the most room for growth, and where you want to prioritize. Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan.
- Use the [Strategic Planning Guide](#) to create an action plan to improve your school's comprehensive mental system. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time.

Domain 1

Teaming Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose "unsure."

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are - or are not - working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment: You will evaluate your school's mental health efforts and the effectiveness of your multidisciplinary teams. You will assess how well your teams communicate and collaborate, whether there's a comprehensive approach to mental health support, and if diverse perspectives are represented within the team.

Teaming	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your school mental health team is multidisciplinary and diverse, with Black women represented in positions of leadership, as teachers, and mental health service providers.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Your school currently has a school mental health team in place that takes charge of implementing and assessing culturally affirming, responsive, and equitable policies and practices (e.g., data management, collaboration with internal and external experts, provision of various levels of mental health support, emphasis on alternatives to suspension, and evaluation methods that incorporate cultural responsiveness in both process and outcomes).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Your school actively employs recruitment and retention policies and practices aimed at hiring staff who share identities with the school or local community (e.g., gathering feedback through surveys, comparing employee identities with community diversity, and partnering with organizations promoting diversity and inclusion).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>4. Your school intentionally employs recruitment and retention strategies to hire staff dedicated to fostering culturally responsive, anti-racist, and equitable learning environments (e.g., revising job descriptions and interview questions, hiring qualified teachers knowledgeable about culturally responsive practices, and providing professional development programs on these topics).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>5. Representatives of different groups (students, teachers, administrators, school mental health staff, and community partners) regularly attend and have an active and equitable voice in school mental health team meetings and decision-making processes (e.g., families and community members have important roles in the school’s decision-making teams; the school asks for input from caregivers, students, and community members to help plan and make decisions; families and students also have a say in creating school rules and ways of doing things).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>6. Your school meaningfully involves students in planning and improving the school’s mental health system and ensures that Black girls are represented (e.g., a student group that investigates and discusses issues on a student level and reports back to the larger mental health team).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>7. Your school ensures that a significant portion of the families that are engaged in planning and improving the school’s mental health system are families of Black girls.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>8. Your school engages in partnerships that fill gaps in school resources and expertise to support Black girls’ social-emotional and mental health needs (e.g., partnering with groups, such as Black Girls Smile, that focus on the mental health and wellness of Black girls).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>9. Communication mechanisms (e.g., team meetings, email communications, conference calls) are established to ensure ongoing and effective communication between school leadership/staff and community partners.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>10. Appropriate documentation and procedures are in place to facilitate communication between school staff and relevant community partners (e.g., communication logs, meeting minutes, etc.).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>11. Systems are established to safeguard the privacy rights of students and their families during the creation, storage, sharing, and disposal of confidential records and information.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Teaming Total Score _____
Teaming Average (Total Score/11) _____

Reflection Questions

1. How effectively does our school mental health team leverage the diverse expertise and perspectives of its members, including Black women in leadership roles, to address the unique needs of our student population?
2. In what ways are students and families, particularly Black girls and their families, actively involved in the planning and improvement of our school's mental health system? How can we ensure their voices are meaningfully represented in decision-making processes?
3. How clear are the roles and responsibilities within our school mental health team(s) and between school staff and community partners? Are there any areas where clarification is needed to enhance collaboration and communication?
4. What measures do we have in place to ensure effective communication between school leadership, staff, and community partners regarding mental health initiatives and resources? How do we safeguard the privacy rights of students and their families throughout these communication channels?

Domain 2

Resource Mapping Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose 0 "unsure."

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are - or are not - working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment? You'll collaborate to pinpoint strengths and gaps in your mental health support system, evaluating how well it serves Black girls' needs and finding ways to enhance it. The goal is to create a visual representation of available internal and external supports to maximize resource utilization. We will provide you with resources such as a resource mapping checklist to begin this process.

Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<p>1. Your school collects information from various people with different perspectives (e.g., students, family members, community organizations, etc.) to better understand the needs and experiences of various groups and their needs.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>2. Your school values feedback and perspectives from families, students and community stakeholders to inform decisions about policies, practices, and interventions related to Black girls mental health (e.g., school uses different forms of data, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc., to understand and address student strengths and needs).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>3. In your process of gathering data on mental needs, your school collects data that asks questions that are culturally relevant questions (i.e. age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, sex, socioeconomic status).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>4. Your school uses multiple methods to center Black girls' voices ensuring their perspectives are heard in assessing and improving the schools methods in assessing their mental health needs (e.g., anonymous surveys, conversations with Black girls, formal listening sessions).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>5. Your school engages Black girls as leaders such as Black Hogwarts that engage youth in dialogue, student-led conferences, etc.) in the process of creating the questions in the needs assessment</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>6. Your school engages in resource mapping to identify and update existing school and community resources to support the basic needs and wellness of Black girls and their families.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>7. Your school provides information and staff are aware of supports and/or referrals to assist families with stressors such as food insecurity, transportation, child care challenges, and housing resources.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>8. Your school uses an up-to-date resource map or guide to inform decisions and selection, planning, and implementation of appropriate services and supports for Black girls.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Your school's existing mental health services and supports are aligned with the needs and strengths of your students and staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Your school's staff understands the array of services available in the community for youth and families.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Families are aware of and understand available school supports and services for student mental health needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping Total Score (Questions 1-11) _____
 Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping Average (Total Score/11) _____

Reflection Questions

1. How do we currently amplify the voices of Black girls in assessing and improving our school's mental health resources? How can we create opportunities for Black girls to tell their stories, facilitated by Black girls and/or Black women? If you're unsure, please indicate that.
2. How are Black girls (especially those who have a disability, are LGBTQ, etc.) centered in our resources and effectively capture the nuances of their experiences? If you're unsure, please indicate that.
3. Have we asked Black girls to review/consult on strengthening needs assessment (i.e. asked for feedback on their preferences of mental health and wellness services) to ensure they are culturally relevant and aligned? If you're unsure, please indicate that.
4. What initiatives can be implemented to improve student awareness and utilization of available resources? If you're unsure, please indicate that.

Domain 3

Multi-Tiered System of Supports Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose "unsure."

Using Your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are – or are not – working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment? You will evaluate your school's mental health services, which are designed to support all students, regardless of their mental health risk level. Many schools focus heavily on crisis intervention, leaving gaps in prevention, early intervention, and recovery support. Implementing a framework like MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) helps provide a balanced, comprehensive approach, addressing these gaps by offering structured, equitable mental health services across the full spectrum of needs.

This assessment will help your school better understand existing programs and services while assessing their inclusivity and cultural responsiveness, especially for Black girls who often face unique mental health challenges related to racial trauma and discrimination. This is crucial to ensure that Black girls feel safe, understood, and supported. By the end, you will determine if these services are meeting the needs of Black girls and helping promote positive social, emotional, and behavioral skills, while also improving staff well-being and overall school climate.

Tier 1: Universal Mental Health Promotion, Services, and Supports

Tier 1: Involves universal supports and mental health promotion for all students (approximately 80% of students will not need to move beyond tier 1 to receive tier 2 or 3 services).¹⁷ The goal is to enhance school climate, student and staff well-being. This can be accomplished by setting clear positive behavior expectations and implementing reinforcement systems, schools can cultivate a more conducive environment to promote mental health and wellness to the entire school community.

School Climate: This section refers to the quality and character of school life. When completing this assessment, consider the patterns (e.g., how Black girls are disciplined compared to their peers, level of participation of Black girls' families in school activities and decision-making processes and patterns of communication between school personnel and Black girls) of Black girls, their families, and your school personnel's school life. Are these patterns reflected in your school norms, goals, values, teaching, learning practices, organizational structure, and interactions with Black girls? A positive school climate can include a sense of safety, respect, engagement in learning, involvement in school activities, and involvement of teachers, all students, and families.

“When I came here, the environment, especially my guidance counselor, was very welcoming. I had a difficult time making friends. So we just talked about ways I can make friends and be more social around my peers. It was very meaningful to me because I’ve never had a counselor who made me feel well adjusted.” –Neveah, Youth Advisor

A positive school climate for Black girls creates spaces where they feel seen, understood and valued, and ensures that policies and interactions are free from racial and gender bias.

To what degree do you feel your school effectively established clear expectations regarding school wide expectations about positive behaviors...	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. School leadership involves families and students to develop and implement expectations about positive behaviors (e.g., visual aids or written or verbal aids for school rules or rewards).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. There are predictable schoolwide expectations that are developed and taught to students and families (e.g., rules are clearly defined, posted and taught like how to be respectful and kind, such as Dawson County Middle School's PROWL acronym) throughout the school).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>3. The physical layout of the school is designed to support optimal functioning (e.g., culturally affirming visuals reflective of the student body, safe and inclusive restorative dedicated spaces like meditation rooms) and safety of all students including Black girls, and all staff to meet their needs and abilities (e.g., including those with disabilities, emotional and behavioral health difficulties, learning disorders).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school improve school climate?

<p>4. Your school creates and maintains a connection with the community inside and outside of school (e.g., school hosts events to foster a connection between the school and community; school administration and staff participate in community events; school makes consistent, predictable efforts to ensure families and community members feel welcomed in the school building).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>5. School climate assessment results are shared and discussed with students, families, social workers, and other school staff personnel in a manner that is engaging, invites feedback oriented towards factors that the school can impact.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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6. Your school allows anonymous input on surveys and other data collection across a variety of different groups within the school community (e.g. students, school administrators, families, community stakeholders, social workers).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Your school disaggregates school climate data based on demographics (e.g. age, sex, gender identity, national origin, religions, sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnicity, disability status, language, socio-economic status) to identify differences by demographic group.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
To what degree do you feel your school effectively provides training/professional development to support staff in receiving ongoing assistance to promote mental health, particularly for Black girls?							
8. Teachers are versed in and use strategies that promote relationships between teachers and families, and connections between Black girls and families to schools.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Your school provides training and support to staff personnel on how to integrate resilience-building into all activities, programs, and interactions with students (e.g., teach stress relieving exercises like square breathing, three senses, and breath of joy ; incorporate break time;teach students to label emotions).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>10. Your school provides school personnel, staff, social workers and teachers an array of well-being education resources and activities (e.g. staff burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue, employee assistance programs, community mental health services).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree do you feel your school increases the social and emotional skills for all students?

<p>11. Your school uses informal and formal strategies to increase students' help-seeking behaviors. (e.g., a system for checking in with students on a regular basis, which can be assisted by emerging technologies that allow for daily wellness check-ins, such as the Odaa App; an open door policy, letting Black girls know that they can come to you if they are ever struggling with their well-being; students creating a "mental health keyword" for use with staff).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>12. Your school teaches students about positive self-identity (e.g., Black girls engage in the development of their cultural self-awareness and identity; students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between cultures and cultural groups and the dynamic nature of those relationships)</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>13. Your school provides all students, specifically Black girls, with opportunities and guidance to develop understanding and skills to meaningfully advocate for social justice (e.g. programs or activities that promote recognizing and understanding systems of oppression are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-semitism).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree do you feel your school services and support are equitable and fit the unique strengths, needs and cultural/linguistic considerations of students and families?

<p>14. Your school fosters an environment to ensure that students most impacted by social injustices (i.e., racism, classism, ableism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, sexism, etc.) and historical trauma feel physically and emotionally safe and welcome (e.g., staff pronounce student names correctly, use correct pronouns, affirm student identities).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>15. Your school provides equitable and barrier-free access to resources, school grounds, and classrooms (e.g., school monitors access to extracurricular activities and opportunities and takes action to reduce disparities; school ensures classrooms and activities are accessible to students with disabilities).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>16. Your school effectively communicates with families to make sure everyone can understand and be understood, regardless of their communication style or language abilities (e.g., information is sent home in the language spoken by students families; staff learn a few words in families' languages; interpretation/ translation services are available as necessary; school identifies communication strategies most effective for their school community and uses them regularly, such as robocalls, newsletters, e-newsletters, social media, texts, presentations, and home visits; positive two-way communication between home and school).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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School climate total score (Tier 1) (Questions 1-16) ____

School climate average (Total score/16) _____

<p>School Discipline: This section refers to how your school reduces the use of suspensions and eliminates summonses and arrests for minor school misbehavior, all while addressing and eliminating discrimination and disparities in discipline based on various factors such as race, religion, gender, and more. This is accomplished by building healthy relationships, reducing exclusionary responses, and increasing mental health literacy to contribute to a supportive community. Modeling, teaching, and acknowledging positive social-emotional and behavioral skills.</p>	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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To what degree does your school implement trauma-informed best practices to promote positive behaviors...

<p>17. Your school adheres to trauma-informed best practices to create a trauma-responsive school (e.g. school staff personnel, social workers and teachers use error correction strategies such as physical distance, consider tone of voice, posture when responding in response to students problem behaviors).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>18. Your school discipline practices are trauma-sensitive. Your school uses policies and practices that consider the effects of trauma and aim to create a healing environment (e.g., staff engage in ongoing professional development about the role of stress and trauma in student behavior; staff and students are knowledgeable about trauma reactions; staff receive ongoing professional development on how to respond to difficult behaviors without causing more distress; staff are trained to de-escalate situations).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school implement positive reinforcement systems and best practices to promote positive behaviors?

<p>19. A system of rewards is implemented consistently where students are treated equitably (e.g. school staff personnel, social workers and teachers minimize inadvertent reward of problem behaviors and create a learning opportunity to empathize desired behavior).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>20. School staff personnel, social workers and teachers provide reminders to let students know when they meet school-wide behavioral expectations (e.g. specific praises to acknowledge students desired behaviors).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>21. School staff identify and use alternative strategies to zero tolerance and exclusionary policies and practices (e.g., restorative practices or culturally responsive positive behavior intervention supports).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school monitor fidelity of the implementation of disciplinary practices?

<p>22. Your school mental health teams monitors and review discipline data (office discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions) for disparities (e.g., seeing if certain groups of students are affected more than others by discipline policies), share this information with students and families, work to understand why disparities exist, and find ways to fix the problem.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>23. Your school's staff including teachers, social workers and administration continuously work to eliminate the use of harmful and exclusionary discipline practices by monitoring and reducing their usage of punitive practices (e.g., avoiding suspensions for discretionary offenses and reducing the use of school resource officers in discipline).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

To what degree does the training provided to school staff encompass understanding on how racism, other forms of oppression and bias influence discipline policies and practices?

<p>24. School staff receive training to understand how racism and other forms of oppression and bias affect discipline policies and practices (e.g., understanding how biases present themselves in subjective/discretionary offenses such as “disrespect”).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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<p>25. School staff participate in training to build positive classroom management skills (e.g., maintaining clear behavioral expectations and consequences; rewarding positive behaviors; understanding underlying issues related to disruptive behaviors and how to address them).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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School discipline total score (Questions 20-29) ____
School discipline average (Total score/10) ____

<p>Curricula and Teaching Practices: This section refers to how your school provides mental health and wellness education for all students and integrates socio-emotional learning (SEL) throughout the school day. Teachers actively reinforce mental health literacy by teaching, modeling, and acknowledging positive socio-emotional skills.</p>	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<p>26. Mental health and wellness learning opportunities are available for students and are included across grade levels and curricula. Additionally, extracurricular activities such as mindfulness clubs and peer support groups provide further opportunities for students to engage with mental health education in a supportive environment).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>27. Social-emotional learning is integrated through the school day and is taught and reinforced by teachers (e.g., teachers actively teach and reinforce SEL skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>28. Your school incorporates culturally affirming content into curriculum programming to increase mental health literacy and social and emotional (SEL) skills among students.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Curricula and Teaching Practices Total Score (Questions 17-28) _____

Curricula and Teaching Practices Average Total score/3) _____

Tier 1 Total Score _____

Tier 1 Average (Total Score/12) _____

Tier 1 Reflection Questions

School Climate

1. What patterns or trends do we observe in the School Climate Total score?
2. In what ways do we foster an environment where Black girls impacted by social injustices feel physically and emotionally safe?
3. How are teachers and staff committed to trust-building and equipped with strategies to build positive relationships with Black girls and their families, fostering a sense of belonging and connection within the school community?
4. How are school-wide expectations developed collaboratively with Black girls and their families to ensure they are culturally relevant and responsive?
5. Does your curriculum incorporate diverse literature, historical narratives and figures, and cultural references that reflect the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of Black women across various subjects and disciplines?

School Discipline

1. What alternatives to zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline exist in your school? Are there restorative discipline practices in place (e.g., peer mediation, impromptu conferencing, circles, community service)?
2. What systems or processes exist to reintegrate students into the school community after receiving a disciplinary sanction?
3. Are educators and other school staff/personnel required or given space to intentionally debrief and reflect on their response to a student exhibiting problematic behavior in the classroom/school community after the fact?
4. When are law enforcement officers called to intervene? Are they involved in student discipline incidents that trained educators and certified mental health professionals can otherwise handle?
5. What continuum of interventions exists, or could we create, to respond to conflict among students or between students and adults that does not include the intervention of a law enforcement officer?
6. What training do educators and school leaders need in order to more effectively respond to conflict in schools without calling the police?
7. When law enforcement officers are called in to respond to legitimate threats to safety, are they trained to be culturally competent and trauma-responsive in schools?

Curricula and Teaching Practices

1. Can you identify specific ways in which socio-emotional learning is integrated into daily classroom activities?
2. In what ways do you observe culturally affirming content being integrated into the curriculum to enhance mental health literacy and social-emotional skills among Black girls? How do you think this impacts the overall well-being of students from diverse backgrounds?
3. What leadership opportunities exist for Black girls at your school?

Tiers 2 and 3: Early Intervention and Access to Specialized Services

Tier 2: Involves early intervention for some students (roughly 15%) who struggle with mild distress.¹⁸ Schools must assess the number of students receiving evidence-informed Tier 2 and Tier 3 services, ensuring they align with best practices and matching these services to individual students' needs and strengths in a culturally affirming and equitable way to prevent the development of mental health challenges.

Selective Services and Prevention Supports: This section refers to ensuring that early intervention strategies for Black girls experiencing mild distress are culturally affirming and equitable, while also effectively aligning with evidence-informed services to prevent the exacerbation of mental health challenges.

To what degree does your school ensure there are adequate resource capacity to implement mental health services and support for Black girls...	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Staff have the resources and training to effectively communicate with families about students' and Black girls social-emotional development or mental health concerns (e.g., QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Training , Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHEA)).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. School staff are knowledgeable about how to support a family in navigating through community services.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Your school provides group-based support and affinity spaces to proactively build a sense of community among Black girls (e.g., offering a group-based support program, such as, The Women's Initiative Sister Circle Program specifically for Black girls, where they can come together in an affinity space to discuss shared experiences, receive support, and build a sense of community).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Your school utilizes members of Black girls' chosen circle of support in emotional and behavioral crisis response protocols (e.g., family members, trusted friends, or community mentors, into its emotional and behavioral crisis response protocols).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school monitor fidelity (accuracy) of the implementation of mental health services and supports for Black girls?

5. School mental health professionals (e.g., social workers) monitor students' progress in the school setting and adjust interventions accordingly (e.g., reviewing student records or progress, directly observing school staff who are implementing the practice, or talking with those implementing or receiving the practice).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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6. School mental health professionals (e.g., social workers) identify culturally sensitive tools or develop a culturally sensitive tool to monitor student progress (e.g., measures to track changes in behavior, emotional well-being, academic performance, and social interactions over time).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school ensure mental health services and supports are equitable and fit the unique strengths, needs and cultural/linguistic consideration of Black girls and their families?

<p>7. Students' progress (with regard to their identified mental health need or concern) is continued across the school setting, and adequate information is shared between educators, school leaders, families, staff or nonteaching coaches, and school and community mental health professionals.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>8. Mental health services are culturally appropriate (e.g., social workers collaborate closely with the families of Black girls, respecting their cultural beliefs and preferences, and involving them in the therapeutic process).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>9. Mental health services are gender-responsive (e.g., teachers, social workers and other school personnel recognize gender, and other identities in shaping the experiences of Black girls and tailor interventions accordingly).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>9. Mental health services are gender-responsive (e.g., teachers, social workers and other school personnel recognize gender, and other identities in shaping the experiences of Black girls and tailor interventions accordingly).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Mental health services are linguistically relevant (e.g., social workers, teachers and other school personnel ensure services provide language access services such as interpretation and translation services for non-English speaking Black girls and their families, handouts, and resources, are available in languages spoken by Black girls and are culturally adapted to resonate with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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To what degree does your school determine whether mental health services and supports are evidenced-informed?

11. School mental health professionals adapt evidence-based interventions to be culturally responsive and prioritize rapport-building for Black girls (e.g., incorporate discussions around racial identity, experiences with discrimination, and trauma stemming from systemic racism).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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12. Student wellness plans are tailored to better address the social-emotional needs of Black girls and improve their academic outcomes (e.g., plans should incorporate culturally affirming practices, including spaces where Black girls can express their identity and experiences).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Tier 2 (Questions 1-12) Total Score _____
Tier 2 Average Score ____/12__

Tier 3: Focuses on a few students (roughly 5%) who do not respond to tier 2 supports and interventions and need further individualized plans.¹⁹ To ensure students' individualized needs are met, staff need a plan in place for monitoring student progress, and implementing crisis response protocols systematically are vital components for effective intervention strategies. In addition, resource capacity strategies are in place to support ongoing training and professional development for staff.

Indicated, Individualized, Services and Supports: This section refers to how your school effectively ensures that evidence-informed services align with individual student needs while also maintaining sufficient resources and providing ongoing training to support these interventions.

To what degree does your school implement a systematic protocol for emotions and behaviors crisis responses?	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Staff members and school mental health professionals connect students with services that are culturally affirming and aligned with their identities.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. There is a defined team responsible for assessing urgent mental health concerns, and staff have been trained to respond appropriately (e.g., the people responsible for specific tasks or duties in a mental health emergency are clearly defined and work as a team).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Mental health emergency protocols are effectively communicated to staff, families, and social workers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Follow-up services are available for students after experiencing mental health emergencies, including plans for transitioning back to school and coordinating wraparound services for those with high mental health needs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Tier 3 (Questions 13-16) Total Score _____

Tier 3 Average Score ____/4____

Tier 2 and 3 Reflection Questions

Selective Services and Prevention Supports

1. How does our school provide group-based support and affinity spaces to build a sense of community among Black girls?
2. How can we commit to trust-building to enhance co-planning with students and families to strengthen prevention strategies?
3. What patterns or trends do we observe in the Tier 2 Total score?
4. Does your school have tier 2 and 3 services that are culturally affirming?
5. How does intersectionality help our school think about the kind of services we might want to add or the limitations of existing services?

Indicated, Individualized, Services and Supports

1. How does our school support Black girls' agency in creating tailored intervention plans to address their needs?
2. Are staff members trained to appropriately respond to students experiencing urgent mental health problems?
3. What patterns or trends do we observe in the Tier 3 Total score?

Domain 4

Mental Health Screening and Referral Pathways Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree.

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose "unsure."

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are - or are not - working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment: You will evaluate your school's mental health efforts around the utilization of a tool or process which employs an entire population, such as your school's student body, to identify student strengths and needs. Screening is often used to identify students at risk for a mental health or substance use concern.

Mental Health Screening and Referral Pathways

To what extent does your school use best practices for mental health screening, planning and implementation...	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your school mental health system has regular, universal mental health screening (i.e., applies to all students) and assessment.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Your school has a team or staff member who reviews screening data and identifies students who require additional support.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Your school includes students and families in informing the screening, planning and implementation process (i.e., conduct surveys and focus groups with parents and caregivers to understand their concerns, suggestions, and expectations regarding mental health services for their children or create advisory committees that include students, parents, educators, and mental health professionals).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. To ensure families and students are fully informed and have an opportunity to consent or opt out of the screening procedures, your school follows a detailed and transparent consent process to ensure families and students understand the purpose, benefits and potential risks of the screening, as well as their rights and options (e.g., the consent forms that participation is voluntary, a checkbox or signature line is included on the form to indicate their decision).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. Your school utilizes a culturally relevant (i.e.; Youth Risk Behavior Survey has components where the tool measures students' identity, race, and ethnicity) screening tool (e.g., YRBSS Questionnaires) or process that considers reliability, feasibility and cost and fit with the goals for screening.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Your school considers screening tools that assess social determinants of health and education (e.g., racism, poverty, social injustice, food insecurity).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Your school screens students for general mental health challenges, risk factors and symptoms (e.g.; depression, suicidality, substance use, trauma, anxiety, ADHD).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Your school screens students for other general mental health challenges (e.g.; academic engagement, sense of safety at school, life satisfaction).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Universal screening systems accurately identify students needing intervention, including those not showing obvious signs of mental health needs, and school staff are knowledgeable about signs requiring further intervention, especially following critical incidents.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Systems are in place to manage different types of referral concerns...							
10. There is an updated list of internal and external mental health resources to support students screened for academic concerns (e.g., grades, advancement).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

11. There is an updated list of internal and external mental health resources to support students screened for emotional and behavioral concerns (e.g., sad, anxious, jumpy, difficulty concentrating, argumentative).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There is an updated list of internal and external mental health resources to support students screened for social concerns (e.g., gender-based violence, bullying, exclusion, substance abuse).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. There is an updated list of internal and external mental health resources to support students screened for physical health concerns (e.g., physical disabilities, vision of hearing impairments, chronic illness such as asthma, injuries).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Referral systems are formalized...							
14. A clear and consistent school-wide (e.g., supports all students and is not limited to specific groups of students or classes) referral process for students with mental health needs is in place and communicated to all stakeholders (parents, staff, students).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Procedures for accessing referral systems are straightforward and easy for students, families, and staff to follow.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. Decisions regarding student interventions are data-driven, utilizing qualitative and quantitative data from observations, caregiver interviews, family communication logs, discipline, attendance, academic records, wellness screeners, referral forms, and documentation of outside services (see Data Collection Checklist in resources).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. School staff (teachers, social workers) are trained in identifying and referring students needing extra social-emotional or mental health support.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. School staff (teachers and social workers) will follow-up with a referral program to ensure ongoing support for the student and family (e.g., the status or outcome of student mental health is communicated to teachers/social workers).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Students and families are aware of the referral process to access mental health services.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Referral systems are formalized...							
20. Referral systems are sensitive to cultural factors (e.g., mental health stigma that might be held by Black girls and their families).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Referral systems are sensitive to gender and sexuality factors (e.g., experiences with gender-based violence, transphobia, and homophobia).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

22. Referral systems are sensitive to linguistic factors (e.g., caregivers who don't speak English, students whose first language isn't English).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Mental Health Screening and Referral Pathways Total Score _____
Mental Health Screening and Referral Pathways Average (Total Score/22) _____

Reflection Questions

1. Do our current assessments accurately capture the needs and experiences of our diverse student body, including Black girls?
2. Are there important questions we need to ask that our current assessments do not address?
3. How can we ensure that referral pathways are stigma-free and address and counteract stereotypes and bias about Black girls?
4. How clear and consistent is our school-wide referral process for Black girls with mental health needs?
5. How can we ensure our school-wide referral process supports Black girls' agency to ensure they can be part of the decision-making process?
6. How can we ensure procedures uplift Black girls' voices and are easily accessible and communicated to all stakeholders, including students, families, and staff (e.g, host information sessions with families to explain mental health services and referral process) ?
7. How can we equip our designated team or staff member responsible for reviewing screening data with the tools and resources to identify Black girls who may require additional mental health support?

Domain 5

Funding and Sustainability Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree.

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose "unsure."

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are – or are not – working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment: You will evaluate your school's mental health efforts around the utilization of a tool or process which employs an entire population, such as your school's student body, to identify student strengths and needs. Screening is often used to identify students at risk for a mental health or substance use concern.

Funding and Sustainability

To what extent does your school use best practices for funding and resources...	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your school uses multiple (e.g., school, local, district, state and federal) and diverse funding (e.g., grants, third party reimbursement, private foundation funding, grants) and resources to support a full continuum of school mental health services and supports.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Your school teams up with the community to get funding and keep programs running that support student success (e.g., community health focused groups, local businesses, and local colleges/universities).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Your school uses strategies uses a process to ensure that funds are spent equitably (e.g., reviewing the budget on a regular basis, making changes as needed, and getting school and community input on how money should be used).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Your school billed Medicaid and private insurance for all services eligible for reimbursement in the previous school year (e.g.; Michigan – IDEA Medicaid revised to include Tier 2 & 3 counseling sessions by school professionals).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

To what extent does your school maximize the expertise and resources of mental health partners to support professional development...

<p>5. Your school utilizes the expertise of family-school-community mental health partners to support ongoing professional development activities focused on serving Black girls (e.g., social workers and/or counselors to train teachers on promoting positive mental health and well-being, community mental health providers to train school staff, social workers on identifying signs of trauma-related concerns).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>6. Your school engages youth focusing on Black girls and families in professional development as learners by offering opportunities for school staff to hear youth and family perspectives and experiences (e.g, involving students and families fosters a sense of ownership and partnership and as a result they are more likely to participate and advocate for mental health programs).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>7. Your school uses diverse professional development modalities to engage school staff (e.g., teachers, administration and social workers) and outreach to families (e.g., in-person lectures, presentations, written resources, consultation and virtual lectures).</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>To what extent are there strategies in place to retain school staff...</p>							

8. Your school assesses and provides support for teacher and staff well-being (e.g. administering a survey using a created or preexisting assessment of teacher/staff well-being , developing formal paths for peer support and mentorship, incorporating mindfulness and well-being into professional development, designing work-free wellness rooms, forming staff wellness groups, or engaging with professional development programs for teacher/staff well being).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Staff members are encouraged to be proactive in their self-care, including the opportunity to develop mental wellness plans .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Your school has strategies in place to retain staff, specifically Black women (e.g., ensures all staff are aware of Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health coverage in insurance benefits).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>To what extent does your school have funding and resources to support Tier 1 (involves universal supports and mental health promotion for all students), Tier 2 (involves early intervention for some students) and Tier 3 (focuses on a few students) services...</p> <p>(if you're unsure of your school's funding and resources for Tier 1 support, you can list "unsure.")</p>							
Funding Availability for Multi-Tiered System of Supports	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. Funding was available for all needed Tier 1 (Involves universal supports and mental health promotion for all students) services and supports for the previous school year.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Funding was available for all needed Tier 2 (Involves early intervention for some students) services and supports for the previous school year.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Funding was available for all needed Tier 3 (Focuses on a few students) services and supports for the previous school year.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Funding and Sustainability Total Score (Questions 1-13) _____

Funding and Sustainability Average (Total Score/13) _____

Reflection Questions

1. In your school, which funding sources are currently being accessed to support school mental health, and which remain to be explored?
2. What mental health services do you believe are missing or underfunded in your school?
3. Are there specific services or programs that would particularly benefit Black girls that are not currently available?
4. What specific mental health initiative or services for Black girls do you think would benefit from targeted fundraising efforts?
5. Are there additional metrics or methods that could provide better insights into the needs and outcomes for Black girls?
6. How can we enhance and expand strategies to ensure the long-term retention of Black women educators?
7. To what extent did your school leverage funding and resources to attract potential contributors?

Domain 6

Data and Impact Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and choose the corresponding boxes to indicate your level of agreement with how well you think your school is performing: (0) Unsure (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Somewhat Agree (5) Agree and (6) Strongly Agree

What if I have difficulty answering a question? If you're stuck on a question, take a guess based on what you know. You can also talk to other team members who might have more info about mental health at school or if you're uncertain you can choose "unsure."

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. Each indicator includes examples of ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are - or are not - working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

What can you expect from this assessment? You can expect to evaluate the long-term effects or changes that occur as a result of the programs, practices, and policies implemented within their school's comprehensive mental health system. You will assess how well these impacts are documented and reported to various stakeholders.

Funding and Sustainability

Data and Impact	Unsure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your school has developed a data collection plan and infrastructure that is aligned to identified key student outcomes, data analysis, and reporting (e.g., grades, attendance, chronic absence, office discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions, performance test scores, achievement, gifted and talented, college and career readiness, involvement, or benchmark test scores).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Your school has developed a data collection plan and infrastructure with student, family, and community input, ensuring the representation of diverse identities and cultural backgrounds.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Your school reports the impact of CSMHS to a broad and diverse group of stakeholders (e.g., youth, families, school and community partners, district leadership, existing or potential funders, non- education community partners, state agencies, local and statewide representatives).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Your school regularly engages students, caregivers, teachers, and staff from diverse backgrounds to provide qualitative feedback on the impact of school mental health services and supports on student outcomes.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. Your school has data-sharing agreements with community partners to help evaluate the impact of community partnerships on student and staff well-being and improvement (e.g., California Community Schools Partnership show how schools can form data-sharing agreements with community partners).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Your school uses data to identify inequities and disparities in mental health outcomes and service utilization.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Your school has identified key mental health outcomes it wants to achieve and has identified measures to monitor progress. (e.g., reduction in self-reported depression levels, increase in students reporting a sense of safety and belonging at school, decrease in disciplinary actions).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Your school collects disaggregated data on identified key student outcomes (e.g., age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, sex, socioeconomic status).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Your school, in collaboration with students and families, has identified key student outcomes specific to the school community upon which to focus measurement of impact (e.g., emotional resilience, athletic achievements, leadership in extracurricular activities).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>10. Your school analyzes discipline data (including any qualitative, narrative data from write-ups) to evaluate whether implemented discipline outcomes are consistent with school discipline policies and uses disaggregated data to locate potential disparities in the implementation of school discipline policies.</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Data and Impact Total Score (Questions 1-10) _____
 Data and Impact Average (Total Score/10) _____

Metrics to consider that could provide better insights into the needs and outcomes for Black girls

Metrics to Assess Mental Health Supports for Black Girls

Identification of Needs:

Question: How many unduplicated students were identified through screening or another referral process to possibly receive Early Intervention (Tier 2) and/or Treatment (Tier 3) services and supports?

Service Provision:

Question: What was the total number of unduplicated students who received at least one Tier 2 or Tier 3 school mental health service?

Note: Include services provided by both school and community-employed providers.

Educational Outcomes:

Question: How many unduplicated students who received Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 services and supports have documented improvement in educational functioning?

Metrics: Grades, benchmark assessments, state testing, attendance, discipline data, IEP review.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Outcomes:

Question: How many unduplicated students who received Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 services and supports have documented improvement in social, emotional, or behavioral functioning?

Metrics: Improvements in social-emotional wellness, mental health functioning, and target problem areas based on screening, assessment, and progress monitoring data collected from students, families, and teachers.

Reflection Questions

1. What data do you currently collect? What data are you not collecting that you believe you should be?
2. What strengths and weaknesses are apparent in your current data and impact assessment processes?
3. In what ways can you enhance your data collection strategy to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness?
4. How does the collection of disaggregated data enhance your understanding of student outcomes and mental health disparities, particularly for Black girls?
5. Are there additional metrics or methods that could provide better insights into the needs and outcomes for Black girls?

Scoring Rubric for Strategic Planning

Thank you for completing NBWJI's CARES assessment tool. Once you have completed the assessment, we encourage you to meet with your Wellness team to review your scores on each domain provided in this document and engage in a strategic planning process. Use this scoring rubric to identify your school's areas of greatest strength (domains and subdomains with higher averages) and need (domains that return lower averages). This rubric will allow you to reflect on the various aspects of your school to drive capacity-building efforts. The table below displays each of the 6 domains examined through the assessment. It is encouraged to select one domain from the list as a starting point that your team wants to improve upon. Typically, there may be a domain in which your team did not score high in. You can prioritize the domain in a short-term plan provided within the Strategic Planning Guide.

Scoring Instructions

Based on each of the domains, list what average total score was for each domain and then add up the total average score for each section and divide by 6. Based on your score you will see below a rating scale. The rating scale is color coded by the average score, 0.0–2.9 is (Emerging), 3.0–4.9 is (Progressing) and 5.0–6.0 is (Mastery).

For your reference please read below to review the indicators for Emerging, Progressing and Mastery.

1. **Emerging:** This typically refers to the initial stages of implementation or development. Schools or districts that are in the “emerging” stage may have begun to recognize the importance of school mental health but have not yet fully integrated evidence-based practices or established comprehensive systems and policies.
2. **Progressing:** Schools or districts that are “progressing” have made significant strides in implementing school mental health initiatives. They may have established some evidence-based practices, developed partnerships with community mental health providers, and begun to integrate mental health into school policies and procedures. However, there may still be areas for improvement or expansion.
3. **Mastery:** This level indicates a high degree of proficiency and integration of school mental health within a school or district. Schools or districts that are “mastering” have fully implemented evidence-based practices, have strong partnerships with community providers, and have established comprehensive, sustainable systems and policies that prioritize and support student mental health.

Using your Results: Don't worry if your scores are low at first. Use them to figure out what needs to improve and make a plan. This tool helps you talk about what's going on, plan for the future, check how things are going, and make your school's mental health system better over time. The specific rating you give yourselves is less important than the discussion that you have as a team. The evidence of how things are – or are not – working will be important as you make a plan for improvement after you are finished with your discussion.

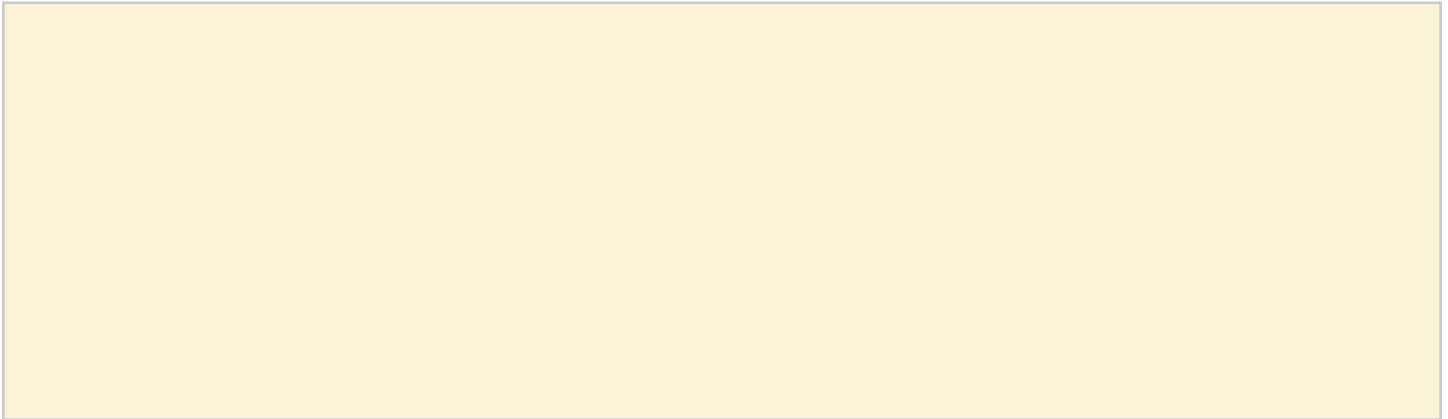
After completing the table, briefly reflect on your results in the space provided. By identifying your strongest domains and the areas of greatest need, (Emerging, Progressing and Mastery) you will be better equipped to prioritize capacity-building efforts.

Domain	Average Score	Score Indicator (Emerging, Progressing, Mastery)
Teaming		
Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping		
Continuum of Mental Health Supports		
Tier 1		
Tier 2		
Tier 3		
Mental Health Screening & Referral Pathways		
Funding & Sustainability		
Data & Impact		

Which domain(s) within your school do you feel are strongest, based on your assessment results?

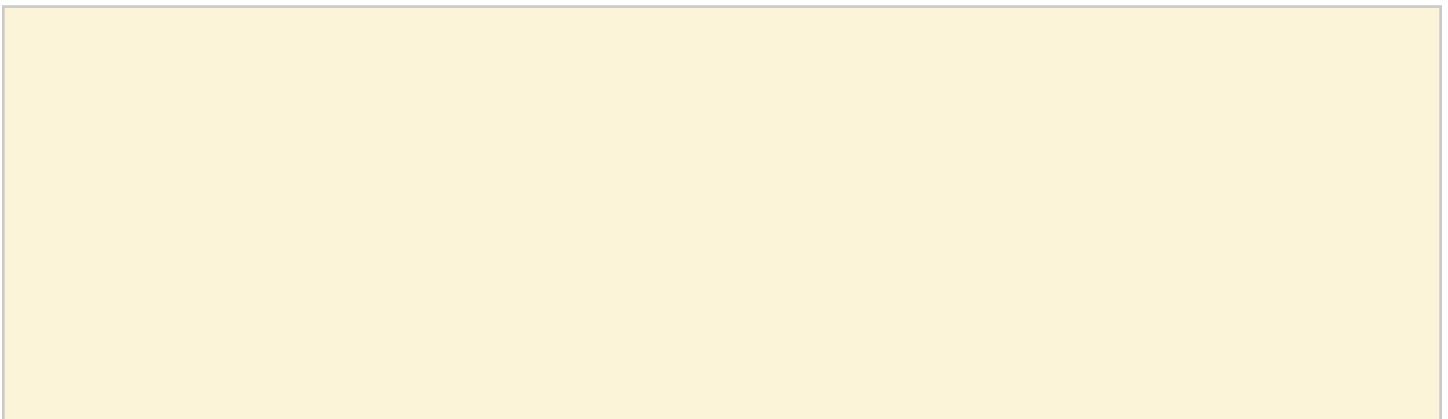
1. **Domain:** _____

Use this space for thoughts and reflections about this domain. What is your school doing well?



2. **Domain:** _____

Use this space for thoughts and reflections about this domain. Where specifically could your school grow, and what resources may be helpful?



List the Domain (s) on which you scored the lowest, and with your Wellness team discuss and evaluate your schools capacity and motivation to implement change in each domain. This will further support your school on identifying the Domain your team would like to focus on and build out a strategic action plan.

Domain Focus	Need for Change (1-10) 1= no need 10=great need	Desire for change (1-10) 1= no need 10=great need	Resource to achieve change (1-10) 1= no need 10=great need	Barriers to change (1-10) 1= no need 10=great need
1.				
2.				
3.				

Choose one domain your team prioritizes for improvement based on the list above. This gap can represent possible focal points for strategic planning, technical assistance, or staff training. The Resources to Build Capacity section at the end of each domain can support your exploration.

1. Domain: _____

Use this space for thoughts and reflections about this domain. Where specifically could your school grow, and what resources may be helpful?

Strategic Planning Guide

This Strategic Planning Guide is a tool for teams who have completed the Creating Affirming, Responsive, and Equitable Schools (CARES) Mental Health System Assessment and are ready to engage in a strategic planning process to improve CARE practices. The CARES Mental Health System Assessment tool provides a comprehensive picture of best and promising practices in the school environment, often surfacing numerous strengths and opportunities for improvement or growth across different areas. However, most schools have more opportunities for improvement than they can realistically address in a given school year. Therefore, this guide is designed to help teams prioritize an area for improvement, develop a strategic, measurable, ambitious, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable goal, and map out an initial plan, including anticipated opportunities and barriers, action steps, and a timeline.

Prioritize Improvement Areas

The CARES Mental Health System Assessment includes six areas (Teaming, Multi-Tiered System of Supports, Needs Assessment and Resource Mapping, Screening and Referral Pathways, Funding and Sustainability, and Data and Impact). NBWJI encourages you to meet with your wellness team and review your scores on each area of the report.

If you are not sure yet which improvement area is right for you, consider the following discussion questions to build consensus on what area(s) to prioritize:

- **Desire** – How much desire (e.g., motivation, need) is there to improve this area?
- **Impact** – How much impact would improvements in this area have on student, staff, and/or school and community outcomes?
- **Resources** – What resources (e.g., staffing, capacity, financial resources, leadership support, community support, partnerships, expertise) are available to make changes and improvements in this area?

Some teams have a clear idea of which improvement area they want to start with after they complete the assessment. If this is your team, select your area and move directly to “[Develop a SMARTIE Goal.](#)”

SMARTIE STANDS FOR:

Strategic	Reflects an important dimension of what your school seeks to accomplish (programmatic or capacity-building priorities).
Measurable	Includes standards by which reasonable people can agree on whether the goal has been met (by numbers or defined qualities).
Ambitious	Challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress—a “stretch” for the organization.
Realistic	Not so challenging as to indicate lack of thought about resources, capacity, or execution; possible to track and worth the time and energy to do so.
Time-Bound	Includes a clear deadline.
Inclusive	Brings traditionally marginalized people—particularly those most impacted—into processes, activities, and decision/policy-making in a way that shares power.
Equitable	Seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression.

Develop a SMARTIE Goal

A SMARTIE goal aids in the development of goals that are Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. This framework, unlike other goal setting frameworks, centers equity and inclusion, which are essential considerations for a CARES Mental Health System.

The following pages can be used as a tool to plan your next steps for the Domain your team has prioritized. We encourage you to complete this section with your Wellness team.

Please state a specific goal within this domain. (For example, for the Teaming domain, one goal might be that “By the start of the 2025–2026 school year, we will establish a mental health team that meets monthly (admin, teachers, students) to support our school with strategies on how to better collect and use data to identify students with a special focus on Black girls who need mental health support).

GOAL Template: By [time], we will [strategic and ambitious goal] to improve [quality indicator].

Pro Tip: Ensure your goal centers equity and inclusion.

How will your team know if you've achieved success within this goal? (i.e., (For example, for the Teaming domain and your goal is to better collect and use data to identify students who need mental health support, one way of measuring success might be that by the next academic school year, the school mental health team will review student mental health screening data for the entire student body twice per year to identify students in need of services and make a plan for meeting those needs).

How is this goal inclusive (i.e., equity and inclusion are centered in the example goal above with the explicit inclusion of representative community members and students within the school mental health team, which empowers them to have decision making power in creating an equitable school mental health system)?

How is this goal equitable (i.e., equity and inclusion are centered in the example goal above with the explicit inclusion of representative community members and students within the school mental health team, which empowers them to have decision making power in creating an equitable school mental health system) ?

What opportunities exist related to this goal?

What have been our past successes?

What current work is taking place related to this goal?

What are our available resources (leadership, infrastructure, staffing, partnerships)?

What barriers exist related to this goal?

What would prevent us from moving forward with this goal?

• What would we need to overcome this/these barrier(s)?

Create an Action Plan

Identify 3-5 short-term action steps and 3-5 long-term action steps (if relevant) that can be taken to achieve this goal. Additionally, list who will be involved. Who will help move this goal forward and their role. Consider multidisciplinary stakeholders from your school, community, and family levels.

Short term Timeline for Improvement: 0-6 months

Action Step	What Resources are Needed?	Team Members Responsible (List name and Role)	Data to Evaluate Change	Target Date

Reflection Questions

1. How will staff be trained and supported?
2. How will data (e.g. fidelity, staff surveys) be used to determine areas of need?
3. How will leadership support the process?

Long term Timeline for Improvement: 7-24 months

Action Step	What Resources are Needed?	Team Members Responsible (List name and Role)	Data to Evaluate Change	Target Date

Reflection Questions

1. How will staff be trained and supported?
2. How will data (e.g. fidelity, staff surveys) be used to determine areas of need?
3. How will leadership support the process?

Questions? We're Here to Help!

If you're interested in learning more about the CARES Initiative or would like the National Black Women's Justice Institute to bring this transformative program to your school, don't hesitate to reach out. Contact Tenaj Moody, Director of Capacity Building and Learning, at tmood@nbwji.org.

At NBWJI, the CARES Initiative is at the heart of our mission to combat school pushout. We provide essential tools, resources, training, and targeted assistance to help schools enhance educators' awareness, skills, and commitment to creating inclusive policies and practices. Together, we can ensure that every student—especially Black girls and gender-expansive youth—feels safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Let's work together to foster a supportive environment that promotes safety, belonging, and opportunity for all!

Learn more about our work: <https://www.nbwji.org/cares-initiative>

Stay connected with us

