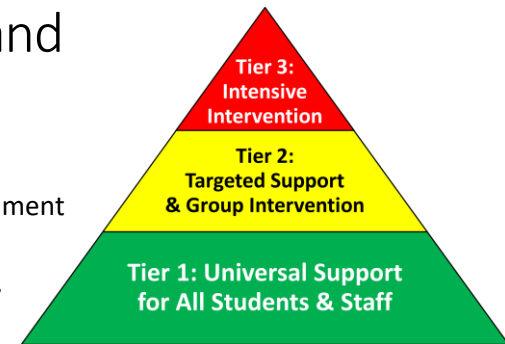




Strategies for Promoting Educator and Student Safety and Wellness During Online Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we interact, presenting new challenges and new opportunities. This document was created using the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework to identify strategies and resources as we continue to support educators, school staff, students, and their families. For more information on the MTSS framework, please visit OPI's [MTSS website](#). Be sure to check out OPI's [School Mental Health website](#) for additional resources.



Strategy for All Populations, All Tiers

Post and share local and national crisis resources

Crisis can arise at any time. Posting local and national crisis resources in places where educators, staff, and students frequently visit ensures everyone knows how to access them when a crisis occurs.

- **Montana Crisis Recovery Hotline** 1-877-503-0833: The free service is meant to help people navigate feelings of isolation, loss, fear, uncertainty, depression, and anxiety they are experiencing during this time. The new service is available to all Montanans, with target populations including educators and school staff.
- **Montana Crisis Text Line:** Text 'mt' to the number 741-741 and a crisis counselor will respond immediately.
- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline** 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255): This helpline provides 24/7 counseling & support.
- Students can download the **#LetsTalk App** (designed for youth) onto their mobile device: [Apple store](#) or [Google Play](#).
- **Montana 2-1-1** Dial 2-1-1 or visit the link to search for services based on type of service and/or location.
- **National Hunger Hotline** 1-866-3-HUNGRY. Helps individuals and families seeking information on how to obtain food.

Strategies to Support Educator and Staff Safety and Wellness

School districts and administrators play a key role in promoting wellness and creating space for all staff to care for themselves and others.

Create space for educator and staff self-care (Tier 1)

Routine self-care is important for all, especially during times of heightened stress and uncertainty. Creating the space for educators to practice self-care throughout the day and teaching them to identify their own needs for self-care can promote wellness and safety.

- [Educator Self-Care Resources from the OPI](#)
- [Self-Care Strategies for Educators During the Coronavirus Crisis](#): Guidance on how to practice self-care & adopt habits of positive thinking

Create space for educators and staff to connect with each other (Tier 1)

- Virtual coffee hour, after-hours virtual gatherings, virtual teachers' lounge, or staff online messaging board

Ensure educators and staff know about the support services available to them (Tiers 2 and 3)

- Provide information to staff on the school's health insurance Employee Assistance Programs

Support educators and staff who may be experiencing secondary trauma (Tiers 2 and 3)

Secondary trauma is the emotional distress that comes from being exposed to the traumatic experience of others. Educators who work with students who are experiencing stress and trauma are likely to experience secondary trauma.

- [Self-Care for Educators](#): Six tips for educators who may be experiencing secondary trauma

Strategies to Support Student Safety and Wellness

Educators and schools play a vital role in creating environments where children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.

Create a positive online school climate (Tier 1)

A positive school climate emphasizes connectedness and is one of the most important steps a school can take to promoting safety and wellness. Teachers can create a positive climate by providing opportunities to stay connected with students and present opportunities for students to connect with one other.

- Integrate Social Emotional Learning practices and evidence-based curriculum. Search “Social/Emotional/Behavioral” on the [OPI Professional Learning Portal](#) to find training. Additional resource: [CASEL SEL Roadmap: Actions for a Successful Second Semester](#).
- Promote connectedness through morning meetings or daily digital check-ins with students/families.
- [Building Respect: Bully Prevention](#) Teacher Learning Hub course
- [Bully Free Montana](#) OPI website with resources for schools, students, and parents.

Teach students how to protect themselves online (Tier 1)

- [Digital Citizenship](#) Teacher Learning Hub course to help educators foster students’ safe, ethical, and responsible use of technology.
- [How can districts promote a safe and secure digital learning environment?](#) Tips for schools and families to ensure students stay safe and practice digital citizenship during online learning.

Help students build resilience (Tier 1)

- [Resilience: Strategies to Increase Optimism](#) Teacher Learning Hub course that provides a variety of strategies to help teachers of any grade support optimism, student motivation, dispute thinking traps, and build resilience.

Practice trauma-informed teaching methods (Tier 2 and 3)

Trauma and distress can illicit stress responses in students that makes learning difficult. By practicing trauma-informed teaching methods, teachers can help mitigate the effects stress and trauma will have on their students and help enable them to maximize their learning potential.

- Learn more on the Teacher Learning Hub by taking [Trauma Informed Practices](#) and/or [Overcoming ACEs in MT Schools: Childhood Trauma and Its Impact on Learning](#).
- [Trauma Sensitive Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) This recorded webinar provides information on trauma and how to mitigate the effects of stress by creating a positive online learning environment.
- Consider setting up a “Virtual Calming Room” for students.

Ensure all staff have training in suicide prevention and know how to identify and support students in distress (Tier 2 and 3)

- Check out [Montana OPI’s Suicide Prevention website](#) for resources and information.
- The OPI Teacher Learning Hub currently offers six courses in [Suicide Prevention](#).
- Utilize an evidence-based program such as SOS, QPR, or Youth Mental Health First Aid.

Know the signs of child maltreatment and endangerment and how to positively intervene (Tier 2 and 3)

- All school staff are legally mandatory reporters. Learn more by taking the Teacher Learning Hub course [Mandatory Reporting for Educators](#) which now includes *Considerations for Virtual Instruction*. Montana Child Abuse Hotline 1-866-820-KIDS (5437).

Strategies for Schools to Support Families and Caregivers:

- Visit the [OPI Family and Community Engagement \(FACE\)](#) webpage for effective parent and family engagement strategies.
- Share out a link to [ParentingMontana.org](#) to families.
- Review and share out with families safety tips from the [Parent and Family Digital Learning Guide](#) from the Department of Education.