



# Promoting Student Resilience

## Research, Evaluation, and Technical Assistance in Schools

RTI International works with education and nonprofit clients to integrate evidence-based practices into real-world education settings to promote social and emotional learning (SEL), build resilience and mental wellness, and prevent substance use and violence.

The RTI Center for Social Determinants, Risk Behavior, and Prevention Science addresses substance use and mental health through research and evaluation of programs in schools.

The RTI Center for Education Services partners with educators to understand and implement research-based approaches to improve social and emotional development.

These RTI Centers collaborate to bring knowledge into practice.

### Project Highlights – SEL for Substance Abuse Prevention

**Prevention Matters Evaluation (Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, 2018–2022).** The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation is funding the implementation of evidence-based drug prevention programming in approximately 180 Marion County, Indiana, schools. As the *Prevention Matters* evaluator, RTI is conducting a process and outcome evaluation to assess program implementation and impact on student outcomes. To address the challenge of grantees delivering unique combinations of programming in different school settings, RTI is harmonizing the variety of grantee-collected evaluation data to yield conclusions about the overall initiative. This work will strengthen grantees' implementation measures, as well as inform the foundation about the resources and supports it may wish to provide schools in the future, resulting in program enhancement.

#### More Information

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**Evaluation of the Resilient Youth Initiative (North Central Health Services, 2019–2022).** This study involves process and outcome evaluation of substance use prevention, social-emotional learning, and mental health promotion programs implemented in approximately 80 primary and secondary schools across 8 Indiana counties. RTI's evaluation includes collection and analysis of data from surveys with students and program implementers, program observations, and student-level administrative data to determine the initiative's complete impact on schools and students.

**Partners in Prevention Evaluation (Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, 2019–2022).** The Partners in Prevention initiative will assist K-12 schools in La Porte County, Indiana to identify, implement, and sustain evidence-based substance use prevention programs. RTI is conducting a process and outcome evaluation that includes a longitudinal student survey, compilation and analysis of school administrative data, annual surveys and interviews with grant directors, and annual surveys with program implementers. This data will reveal the effectiveness and delivery of programming in participating schools.

**Peer Health Exchange (PHE) Evaluation (Peer Health Exchange, 2019–2022).** The PHE program trains college students to teach a 16-session, skills-based health curriculum in under-resourced high schools across the country. The goal of PHE is to provide young people with the knowledge and resources to make healthy decisions. RTI's evaluation uses survey and archival data to compare students in PHE schools with those in propensity score-matched schools. Outcomes being examined include substance use, sexual behavior, social-emotional learning, academic achievement, mental and physical health, and accessing of related resources.

## Project Highlights – Mental Health and School Safety

**National Evaluation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative (U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services; 1999–2017).** SS/HS was a comprehensive, school-based approach designed to promote and improve the emotional, mental, and behavioral health of youth, reduce substance use and violence, and create safe learning environments in schools. RTI collected, analyzed, and reported data on the implementation and results of SS/HS.

**School-Based Mental Health Program in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (National Institute of Justice (NIJ), 2016–2019).** Funded by NIJ's 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, RTI partnered with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina) to test the implementation, cost, and outcomes of three types of school-based mental health services. Enhanced school-based mental health services include training staff in evidence-based treatments, providing dialectical behavior therapy, and establishing trauma-informed Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) groups.

**All Hands on Deck (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2018–2019).** Funded by NC's DPI, RTI's Center for Education Services is working with three NC school districts to develop social and emotional learning (SEL) skills among teachers, principals, counselors, and school resource officers (SROs) as a preventive approach to improve school safety through strengthened adult-student relationships and interactions. Although there are immediate needs for better safety equipment, student crisis services, and additional support personnel, part of a comprehensive approach to improving school safety and promoting the resilience of students and school staff involves programs to create environments that prevent, and do not merely react to, potential safety issues and behavioral problems.

**A Randomized Evaluation of a Comprehensive, Whole-School Intervention for Discipline Disparities (NIJ, 2018–2021).** In partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina), RTI is evaluating their three-pronged approach to improving self-efficacy and reducing disparities in suspensions and expulsions among African American males in high school. The approach uses Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, restorative practices, and culturally responsive practices to engage youth and staff members in reducing bias and improving school safety behaviors.

**Evaluation of Men of Strength (MOST) Club (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017–2020).** Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, that works to promote resilience and reduce men's violence against women by challenging traditional norms about masculinity. RTI is working with MCSR to evaluate their MOST Club in high schools. The evaluation will collect web-based survey data from school staff members, MOST Club facilitators, and student participants to assess MOST Club implementation and outcomes. A social network analysis will also examine how program messages are disseminated from MOST Club members to their peers.

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RTI 13065 R1 0220