



**Arizona Department of Education**  
Office of Policy Development and Government Relations

**Resources Supporting SB 1376 – Schools; Curriculum; Mental Health**

[Senate Bill 1376](#) was signed into law July of 2021 and became effective September 29, 2021. It amends ARS 15-701.02 by requiring Health Education instruction to include mental health instruction. The new law includes the following:

- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to mandate that all health education instruction include mental health instruction. Mental health instruction may be included in a health education course or another existing course.
- Specifies that mental health instruction must incorporate the multiple dimensions of health.
- Directs SBE to consult with mental health experts, mental health advocacy organizations, and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) when adopting this requirement.

During the October Board meeting, SBE amended rules R7-2-301 and R7-2-302 requiring healthy/physical education to include mental health instruction and allowing mental health instruction to be included in other subject areas. These new rules are effective as of October 26, 2021.

**Definitions**

**Mental Health** includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, poor mental health and mental illness are not the same. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person diagnosed with a mental illness can experience periods of physical, mental, and social well-being.<sup>1</sup>

**Mental Health Instruction** should contain information on adolescent brain development, emotional regulation, social competency, mental illness and stigma reduction. A mental health curriculum for K-12 should include the following standards:

- Understanding how to optimize and maintain good mental health;
- Understanding mental disorders and their treatments;
- Decreasing stigma; and
- Increasing health-seeking efficacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (June 21, 2021). *About Mental Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>



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**Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.<sup>2</sup>SEL can support mental health instruction.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Mental Health Instruction in Stand Alone Health Education Courses:**

- Provide health education, taught by a certified health education teacher, that includes evidence-based mental health instruction for all students.
- Mental health curriculum and resources should be evidence-based and include resources and guidance developed by mental health professionals, and should be age, grade, and developmentally appropriate for all students.
- Local education agencies (LEAs) should integrate ADE's SEL Competencies into existing classes and school environments.
- LEAs should partner with school-based or community-based mental health professionals to provide support to students and have a referral process for doing so.

#### **Mental Health Instruction Included in Existing Courses:**

- Mental health curriculum and resources should be evidence-based and include resources and guidance from mental health professionals.
- Clear alignment exists between mental health instruction and Arizona's Physical Education Standards and should be included as part of an evidence-based curriculum.
- Mental health professional development should be provided for all staff, including how to incorporate mental health instruction into existing lesson plans.
- LEAs should integrate ADE's SEL Competencies into existing classes and school environments.
- LEAs should incorporate evidence-based mental health instruction into Career and Technical Education, Science, Early Childhood Education, and other relevant courses.
- Evidence-based mental health instruction and resources provided by a School Counselor.
- Evidence-based mental health instruction and resources provided by a Social Worker or School Psychologist.
- LEAs should partner with school-based or community-based mental health professionals to provide support to students and have a referral process for doing so.

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<sup>2</sup> CASEL. (2021). *Fundamentals of SEL*. CASEL. <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>



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**Resources**

Health Education Curriculum Assessment Tool (HECAT-Module MEH) - can be used to analyze and score curricula intended to promote mental and emotional health  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/hecat/pdf/hecat\\_module\\_meh.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/hecat/pdf/hecat_module_meh.pdf)

Arizona SEL Competencies  
<https://www.azed.gov/improvement/social-emotional-learning/>

School & Behavioral Health Partnerships: A Resource Guide  
<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:79a9b141-2b1c-4722-ba58-5847299d3e00#pageNum=1>