ISSUE BRIEF NO. 5

School building administrator reports of screening practices across academic, physical health, and behavioral domains

The NEEDs² Project

Schools have been identified as an ideal site for both identifying and providing needed social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) health services. Despite the impact SEB problems can have on student outcomes, preliminary data suggest that few schools conduct SEB screenings.¹ In 2015-16, the NEEDs² team conducted online surveys of district administrators, school administrators, student support personnel, teachers, and parents.² As part of the survey, 475 building administrators reported on their schools’ approaches to identifying at-risk students in academic, health, and SEB domains.

Key Findings

➤ Nearly all elementary-level building administrators (98%), and the majority of secondary-level building administrators (85%), reported use of academic screening.

➤ Although the majority of both elementary and secondary school building administrators reported using academic and physical health screenings in their schools, less than a third reported using SEB screenings.

- Reported rates of SEB screening were roughly similar at the elementary (32%) and secondary (36%) levels.
The most commonly reported approach to SEB screening is to refer students exhibiting SEB problems to an internal support team to develop interventions.

Although only 5% of school building administrators report using universal SEB screening (i.e. brief measure completed for all students) in their schools, 35% report that schools should use universal SEB screenings.

Approaches to School-Based SEB Screening

In those school buildings in which universal SEB screenings were conducted (n = 46):

- Screenings most commonly focused on students’ social skills (83%), general behavioral risk (76%), and self-esteem (70%).
- Screenings least frequently assessed for suicidality (30%), substance use (28%), and exposure to traumatic events (28%).

For Additional Information

