

Implications

Wisconsin students described stressors and supports across all levels of the social ecological spectrum – individual, interpersonal, school/organizational, and policy/systems levels. This suggests that there are points of intervention to improve students' mental health and wellness across this spectrum as well:

Individual level:

- Promote and encourage healthy coping strategies, such as exercise and mindfulness-related strategies
- Emphasize the importance of good sleep for mental health

Interpersonal level:

- Create opportunities for connection among students and their peers
- Ensure that students have opportunities to connect with peers who share similar experiences (e.g., students from underrepresented groups) to facilitate a sense of belonging
- Facilitate conversations between students and important adults in their lives around mental health and well-being
- Increase the mental health literacy of adults who interact with students, including caregivers, teachers or faculty, and primary care doctors
- Promote messaging that friends should reach out and check-in when they are concerned about one of their peers

School/Organizational level:

- Review policies and curriculum to prioritize whole student learning (Learning Policy Institute, 2022)
- Provide students with quiet moments to relax and reflect during the school day
- Schedule breaks between school hours and the start of extracurricular activities to allow students to complete schoolwork before moving on to other activities
- Ensure learning environments are safe and supportive of all students
- Create spaces that are soothing and promote focus and learning
- Work with community-based mental health providers to facilitate connections to community resources when needed

Policy/System/Cultural level:

- Actively combat stigma by advocating for students with mental health issues and providing space for sharing of mental health challenges
- Ensure that appropriate screening and referral protocols are in place to assist students who have a mental health crisis or are at-risk for suicide
- Establish processes to support transitions in and out of care (e.g., transitioning out of child welfare system) that includes early collaboration across agencies and elevates the voice of the young person
- Actively engage students when reviewing or developing new policies and programs