

Mental Health Challenges in Vermont Schools

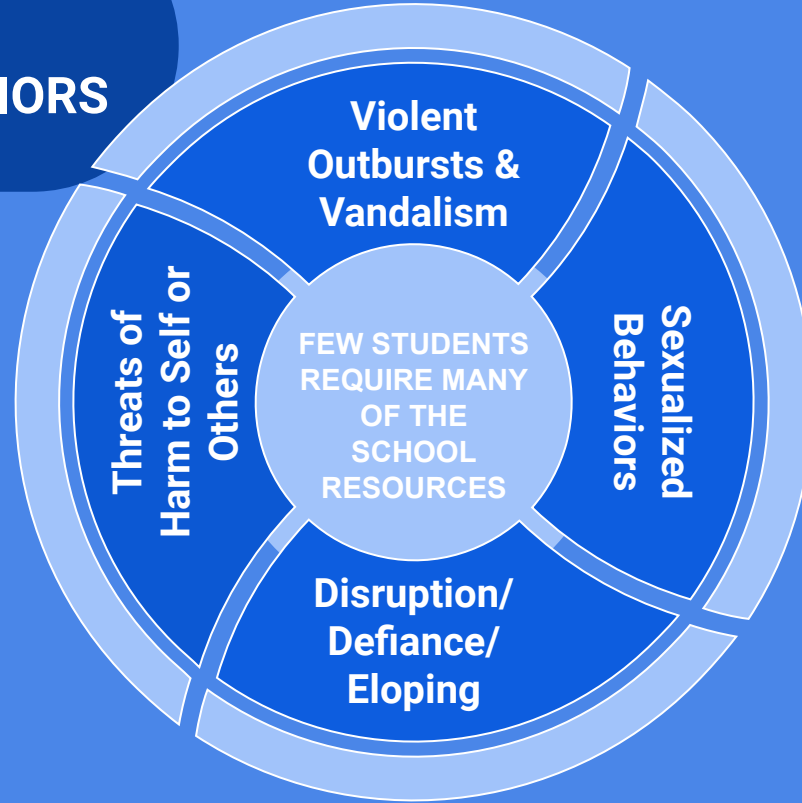


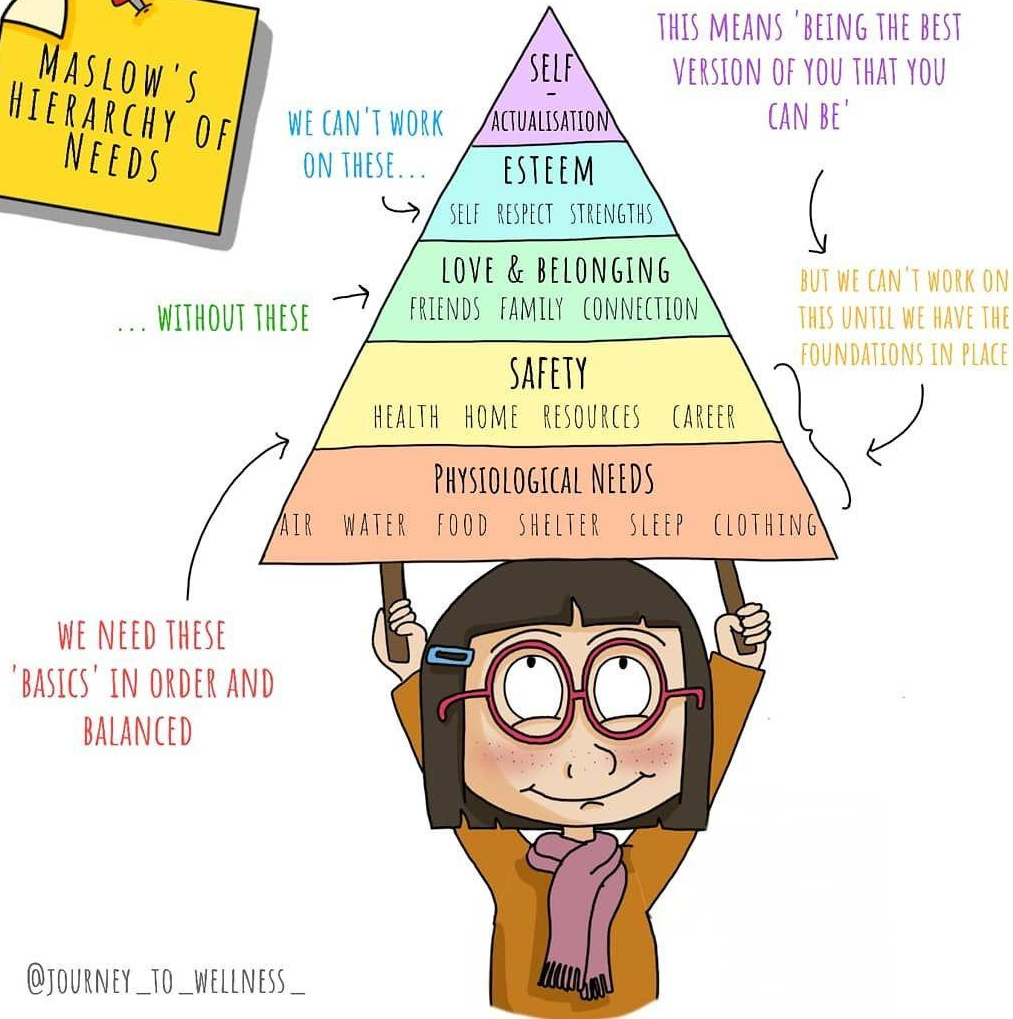
April 14, 2022

Testimony Vermont House Education Committee

Lynn Cota, Superintendent
Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

**GROWING COMPLEXITY
AND SEVERITY
OF STUDENT BEHAVIORS**






Until we meet the basic needs of students and families, we cannot expect students to be proficient in academic or social emotional skills.

- ***Food/Water***
- ***Housing***
- ***Safety***
- ***Clothing***
- ***Resources - Mental Health, Economic, Healthcare, and Childcare***



Vermont

Afterschool

A photograph of a stack of several large, grey, rectangular stones or bricks, stacked in a slightly irregular manner. The stones are set against a dark, possibly black, ground surface. In the background, there is a wall made of vertical wooden planks painted a vibrant red. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows. The overall scene suggests a foundation or a base of something that is being built or is under construction.

**The Pandemic has
caused greater
instability to the
foundation that holds
up our schools!**

LIMITED OUTSIDE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

01

Local Mental Health Designated Agencies

- Waitlists for mental health counseling for youth and families
- Long waitlists for In school support services
- Staffing shortages (>20% vacancies overall, 37% of vacancies in school-based programs, some programs >50% vacancies)

02

Human Services

- DCF referrals up
- Workforce shortage (nearly 50% at one time)
- Pandemic barriers to in home support for families
- Some children experienced more trauma related to deteriorating adult mental health, domestic violence, and substance use during the pandemic

03

Intensive Therapeutic Programs & Resources

- Long waitlists for more intensive therapeutic alternative programs (> a year in some cases)
- Limited availability for residential mental health treatment placements - some have closed
- Limited short term stabilization/crisis beds
- Long waits in Emergency Rooms while awaiting crisis services

Human Services

- Address Salary Inequities Related to Staffing Shortages
- Fund Resources to Ensure Families Can Access Services that Address Basic Needs

Basic Needs for Families

- Food
- Shelter
- Healthcare
- Services
- Safety
- High Quality Childcare
- Broadband Access

PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FACED IN VERMONT SCHOOLS

Designated Mental Health Agencies

Increase funding for Designated Mental Health Agencies

- Suicide Prevention
- Addiction
- Domestic Violence
- Youth Mental Health Counseling
- Adult Mental Health Counseling
- Intensive Family Based Services
- Mental Health Services in School

Intensive Mental Health Resources for Youth

- Intensive/Therapeutic In Patient Programs
- Stabilization Beds
- Step-Down Resources
- Therapeutic Alternative Programs
- Equitable Regional Access to Resources

The best way to support Vermont schools with mental health, is to support the systems schools rely upon to support children and families in crisis. If we can work to ensure that families have access to necessary resources to meet their basic human needs, fewer students will require more intensive interventions.

When we can offer necessary resources and services for children and families when they need it, everyone wins!

