Rhode Island Trauma-Informed Schools Final Report: An Addendum to the Implementation Plan and Supporting Materials

RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Table of Contents

RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Introduction

The Rhode Island Trauma-Informed Schools Act, RIGL 16-21-41, was signed into law in June 2022 and established the Trauma-Informed Schools Commission (the Commission) to assist the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) with implementing the act. Commission members represented a range of health and education system interest holders as required under the legislation.

The Commission was charged with

- conducting a review and assessment of existing trauma-informed school- and community-based resources and initiatives across the state;
- informing the development of a trauma-informed school implementation plan and supporting materials that was submitted to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education;
- researching, identifying, and cataloging state, federal, and philanthropic sources that align with the purpose of the act; and
- submitting a final report that details the Commission's findings and recommendations for implementing trauma-informed practices in every elementary and secondary school in Rhode Island.

The Commission's preliminary report was submitted in March 2023. The Commission's Implementation Plan was approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education on March 26, 2024. The Implementation Plan outlines the vision and charge of the Commission and provides an overview of research, best practices, and key frameworks informing the Commission's work.

This Final Report (the Report) is the third and final document required from the Commission per the legislation. The Report begins with the results of a public input process on the Implementation Plan; highlights a set of priority actions from the Commission; and ends with a catalog of state, federal, and philanthropic sources for implementing trauma-informed practices in Rhode Island schools.

The Final Report presents an ambitious path toward fully integrating trauma-informed practices within all Rhode Island schools. As the Report will make clear, the federal funding that currently supports the school health work in the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports at RIDE is ending in 2026 and 2027 (see Figure 1 on page 12). Expanding the work of this office will require additional investments from the General Assembly.

Implementation of the recommendations would require expanded operational capacity for managing departmental changes and collaboration, making key decisions, championing the importance of the work, offering guidance and strategic direction, and providing professional development and support to local education agencies (LEAs). RIDE has demonstrated commendable resourcefulness in acquiring external funding from federal entities to support trauma-informed practices. However, a transition to a recurring, sustainable funding source of state allocations would be necessary to maintain a basic state infrastructure to support this work and implement any new initiatives, such as those described in this Report.

Recommendations for Implementing the Trauma-Informed Schools Act in Rhode Island

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively **resist re-traumatization.** (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 9)

The recommendations in this Report and the research base underlying each of them are described in detail in the Implementation Plan along with lists of example actions Rhode Island might take to implement the recommendations. The Commission recommends reading the Implementation Plan in full prior to reading this Report.

As described in detail in the Commission's Implementation Plan, a trauma-informed school is one where all members are aware of and responsive to the effects of stress and trauma on human development and well-being. Trauma is a person's experience of an event rather than the event itself, and trauma can impact nearly every aspect of someone's life, including emotional regulation and learning. However, a history of trauma is not deterministic, as there are methods to prevent and heal from its effects at any age, including fostering culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed practices in school.

A culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed school system supports the behavioral, emotional, relational, and academic needs of everyone involved. This approach fosters an educational environment that prioritizes safety, inclusion, belonging, and support, recognizing the importance of addressing not just behavioral symptoms but the overall well-being of students and staff, especially those who have experienced adversity.

Through the legislation and required activities, the Commission has identified the following five recommendations for implementing the Trauma-Informed Schools Act:

- Promote a shared understanding among adults in schools about the prevalence and impact of trauma and about trauma-informed approaches.
- Adopt trauma-informed disciplinary procedures and practices.
- Implement school-based planning processes that promote trauma-informed practices.
- Improve educator and school staff well-being and quality of life.
- Provide wraparound supports for the whole person and community.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Insights From the Public on the Implementation Plan

After the Council approved the Implementation Plan, the Commission sought additional feedback from the public on the Plan's specific recommendations and example actions via survey in April 2024. This section describes the survey process and summarizes its results (see Appendix B for detailed results). Quotes from both the April 2024 survey and October 2023 needs assessment focus groups are included in this section to contextualize the survey results. The purpose is to help guide implementation of key recommendations within the policy, programmatic, and historical contexts of the work.

The survey asked for input from the participants on the significance of each recommendation if implemented as well as the perceived benefits and challenges of implementing the recommendations. The survey also asked the participant to rank the priority actions under each recommendation (see Appendix B for a copy of the public input survey questions).

Survey Outreach and Participation

The survey was sent to the following groups, who were encouraged to share with their networks:

- All email addresses the Commission gathered from recruitment for focus groups and interviews during the Implementation Plan needs assessment, including school staff, school and district leaders, community-based organizations, caregivers, and students.

- Members of the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), which was developed to advise RIDE and other partners on policies, programs, and practices that promote equitable access to high-quality school- and community-based mental health and related services for youth and their families. There are currently 41 organizations/LEAs represented on the SHAC with more than 100 members.

This outreach resulted in 89 responses to the public input survey, which represented a wide range of interest holders, including the following:

- social workers: 36 percent

- principals/school leaders: 21 percent

- parents/caregivers: 9 percent

- school nurses: 8 percent

- school psychologists: 5 percent

- employees of community-based organizations: 5 percent

- K–12 teachers: 1 percent

- superintendents: 1 percent

- other (e.g., child psychologists, occupational therapists, special education directors): 14 percent

Although we received no survey responses from students during this phase of input, students did participate in the needs assessment focus groups that informed the development of the recommendations in the Implementation Plan. Refer to the Implementation Plan for additional information on the needs assessment process and its findings.

The results presented in this section should be viewed as a sample of public insight and not necessarily representative of the state education community and interest holders.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Summary of Survey Results

Overall, survey responses indicated that, if implemented, all five recommendation areas would be significant in supporting trauma-informed practices in schools statewide.

> **"That's something that I think needs to be said about trauma-informed practices. This is not about creating a system to be able to just work with children in foster care or children who have refugee status or children that have the macro things that we think about when we talk about trauma. This is something for all children."**
>
> — FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Of the five recommendations, more than 70 percent of respondents believed the following would be *very significant* if implemented:

- Promote a shared understanding among adults in schools about the prevalence and impact of trauma and about trauma-informed approaches.
- Adopt trauma-informed disciplinary procedures and practices.
- Improve educator and school staff well-being and quality of life.

Across all recommendations, the benefits most commonly named by survey participants were

- *staff capacity building* (29 mentions),
- *adult well-being* (17 mentions),
- *positive outcomes for students* (16 mentions), and
- *systemic changes to support change and sustainability* (14 mentions).

The improved well-being of students and staff together was identified as a key benefit of implementation (33 total mentions). While survey participants named the importance of developing school staff capacity to implement trauma-informed approaches, they also drew important connections to the systemic changes needed to make this work possible in both the short and long term.

> **"Focusing on establishing organizational structures that facilitate the alignment of initiatives, policies, and procedures across the state as a whole will affect the collaboration among students, staff, and families firsthand in a positive way."**
>
> — SURVEY RESPONDENT

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Priorities From Survey Respondents

Survey respondents were also asked to review the potential actions for each recommendation area and rank them in order of priority. The top-ranking action from each area is listed below, and rankings of all areas are included in Appendix B.

Recommendation A

RIDE and LEAs could develop professional learning programs (e.g., workshops, online modules and courses, coaching sessions) that are aligned with established competencies and focus on building specific skills and knowledge required for culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed practices.

Recommendation B

RIDE could review the Rhode Island Education Code to ensure that discipline policies align with a trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive approach.

Recommendation C

RIDE and LEAs could establish organizational structures that facilitate the alignment of initiatives, policies, and procedures across different levels of the education system (state, region, district, school).

Recommendation D

RIDE could develop programs that focus on building the capacity of leaders, school boards, unions, and policymakers to understand the importance of staff well-being and its effects on student and school outcomes. Such efforts would make these groups aware of resources and supports that staff need to effectively teach and lead and would make them aware of the systems and structures needed to support the well-being of all school interest holders (students, staff, families, and leaders).

Recommendation E

RIDE could expand the reach of services by providing guidance to school districts on the various models to address physical and mental health and collaborating to expand the reach of Medicaid services.

Anticipated Challenges of Implementing the Recommendations

Survey responses spoke to the systemic and structural challenges facing implementation (e.g., lack of resources, initiative fatigue, and statewide staffing shortages), as well as the effects these challenges have on the well-being of school staff and therefore students.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

"Generally, no one cares about staff well-being. It is essential to change this culture and get administrators and politicians to understand that teacher and other staff working conditions are student learning conditions."

— SURVEY RESPONDENT

Survey participants highlighted the following challenges to implementing the recommendations, in order of mentions:

- the need for *resource allocation and funding* (31 mentions)

- concerns about *initiative fatigue and time constraints* (22 mentions)

- the need for *structural changes to support change and sustainability* (17 mentions)

- challenges with *buy-in and alignment* (17 mentions)

- *staffing shortages* (17 mentions)

- challenges with *burnout and need for adult wellness* (14 mentions)

In response to these concerns, the Report examines in detail the challenge of resource allocation and funding to support this work in the section titled "State, Federal, and Philanthropic Sources That Align With the Purpose of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act."

Priority Actions

With public input, including through the needs assessment described in the Implementation Plan and the survey described in this Report, the Commission has identified the following priority actions for RIDE in implementing the Trauma-Informed Schools Act:

- Develop the infrastructure and systems needed for a comprehensive professional development strategy (training of trainers, coaching, communities of practice, etc.).

- Create guidance for LEAs on developing trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive discipline policies.

- Establish organizational structures that facilitate collaboration among schools, districts, and community organizations.

- Develop guidance for LEAs to create programs that focus on building the capacity of staff and leaders to recognize and address well-being challenges.

- Collaborate with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services on the expanded Medicaid waiver to support physical and behavioral health services.

The sections that follow describe the priority actions as well as opportunities for alignment with existing initiatives identified in the landscape analysis. For an exhaustive list of the Commission's recommendations and example actions and a detailed discussion of supporting research for each recommendation, see the Implementation Plan.

RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Action A Subject to Available Resources: Develop the Infrastructure and Systems Needed for a Comprehensive Professional Development Strategy (Training, Training of Trainers, Coaching, Communities of Practice, etc.)

According to a RIDE review of teacher preparation programs in the state, Rhode Island teachers are required to take course-work related to trauma-informed practices. However, although many school staff enter the profession recognizing the importance of culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed approaches, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive professional support in this area. To address this gap, professional learning opportunities to support trauma-informed schools should include ongoing supports for educators and school staff. School-based resources and continuous support can help ensure that educators and administrators have the necessary knowledge, tools, and mindsets to create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments. Furthermore, as highlighted in Action D, well-being can play a critical role in educator self-efficacy and implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed approaches. Improving systems to ensure the well-being of educators and school staff can provide them with the feelings of safety and support needed to regularly use trauma-informed approaches in the classroom.

Opportunities for Alignment With Existing Initiatives

- Many districts and organizations throughout the state offer access to Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training, which teaches staff how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use.

- Bridging Research, Implementation, and Data to Guide Educators in Rhode Island (BRIDGE-RI) offers professional learning courses, including a course on Tier 1 strategies for behavior, social–emotional learning, and climate.

- Many districts decide on their own professional development offerings either through in-house or external instructional or other experts.

- RIDE offers targeted trainings for school-based mental health professionals through the U.S. Department of Education School-Based Mental Health Services Grants.

> "People who make decisions about professional learning recognize the need and they invest in trainings, whether it be in person or taking courses online. But I think educators struggle with putting together disjointed professional development on topics around mental health, whether it be trauma, whether it be anxiety, whether it be behavior, and trying to connect how all of those are cohesive and how they can seamlessly support all students along with the message that if you do something that supports one student, say, with trauma services, everybody benefits."
>
> — FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Action B Subject to Available Resources: Create Guidance for LEAs on Developing Trauma-Informed, Restorative, and Responsive Discipline Policies

As outlined extensively in the Implementation Plan, many students experiencing chronic stress, toxic stress, or trauma are likely to exhibit behaviors that are punished rather than understood as a communication of underlying needs. RIDE and LEAs should integrate proactive systems, routines, and procedures as well as the content of culturally restorative approaches into the comprehensive professional development strategy (as outlined in Action A). This includes building on existing coaching or training that supports crisis and verbal de-escalation and restorative and trauma-informed practices and that reduces hands-on intervention in schools. As the state works to develop its strategy, RIDE staff should ensure that LEAs have guidance on statutory requirements for developing discipline policies that align with this trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive approach.

> **Culturally responsive and sustaining education is an approach to advancing learning and equity in education by creating culturally affirming and inclusive learning environments and experiences that support the attainment of comparably positive outcomes for all student groups. (Warner & Browning, 2021, p. 2)**

Opportunities for Alignment With Existing Initiatives

- RIDE collects data on discipline outcomes on the district and state levels and convenes LEAs as part of the SHAC to promote knowledge sharing on restorative initiatives.

- RIDE creates guidance on statutory requirements, such as supporting youth in foster care and youth who identify as transgender, and might use that process as a model for developing guidance on restorative and responsive discipline policies.

> **"Yesterday, I had a student who really felt that she was being dismissed by the teacher, got upset, probably would've escalated into something. I was able to call the restorative coach. She came down, and this child was dealing with a lot of stuff. So, she teamed up with the social worker, they got to the bottom of why she was so upset, and it actually stopped probably a little fisticuff thing happening."**
>
> **— Focus Group Participant**

Action C Subject to Available Resources: RIDE and LEAs Could Establish Organizational Structures That Facilitate the Alignment of Initiatives, Policies, and Procedures Across Different Levels of the Education System (State, Region, District, School)

Having aligned systems focused on trauma-informed practices means that educators at every level of the school system—from the state level to the classroom—are working simultaneously and coherently to sustain conditions for whole-person learning and development. In Rhode Island, creating guidance on how to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into existing school improvement structures and initiatives may support alignment and avoid the initiative fatigue described in the public input survey responses. Equitable outcomes are more likely when trauma-informed and related whole-person initiatives are implemented within an aligned and coherent system that involves all interest holders, including students, staff, families, leaders, and policymakers (Walrond & Romer, 2021).

Opportunities for Alignment With Existing Initiatives

- RIDE convenes LEAs as part of the SHAC to promote knowledge sharing on trauma-informed practices.

- SurveyWorks data and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey offer standard measures for well-being among youth in schools, which may support continuous improvement. The School Health Profiles provide data on programs, practices, and policies to inform comprehensive district and school approaches to support students, staff, and families.

- RIDE provides technical assistance to district Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) coordinators on how to implement MTSS and has developed a district practice profile to support this work. RIDE is currently working on a building practice profile to support this work within individual schools.

> "Rhode Island's such an interesting place. We're so small and we should be able to know everybody. We don't. We're siloed in a lot of ways, but I think one of the real strengths in Rhode Island around this is that there are nonprofits and there are advocates that are so committed to doing this."
>
> — Focus Group Participant

Action D Subject to Available Resources: Develop Guidance for LEAs to Develop Programs That Focus on Building the Capacity of Staff and Leaders to Recognize and Address Well-Being Challenges

Ensuring the well-being of educators and school staff is paramount for the successful implementation of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act. Poor teacher mental health can lead to worse outcomes for students, both academically and in other areas (Madigan & Kim, 2020; McLean & Connor, 2015). Poor mental health can also significantly impact an individual's ability to learn new approaches to teaching and discipline, making teacher well-being foundational for effectively implementing the robust professional learning offerings described in Action A. Guidance from RIDE on recognizing and addressing well-being challenges might include information on mental health awareness, stress management strategies, work–life harmony strategies, relational skills, coping skills, and so on. Ongoing professional development opportunities can ensure that staff continuously enhance their well-being competencies. Nonetheless, these technical, short-term, individual actions cannot replace adaptive, longer-term, collective and structural endeavors to address the complex, systemic nature of well-being. The way

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

systems and structures such as staff evaluations or leave policies are designed can impact any well-being efforts and must be addressed to create the conditions necessary for both student and staff well-being.

Existing Initiatives Aligned With This Action

- Pure Edge offers a Culture of Care webinar series aimed at providing strategies designed to support the health and wellness of educators and learners by sharing simple strategies to reduce stress and improve focus.

- Educator support is a priority for the commissioner of elementary and secondary education and is included in RIDE's Strategic Plan, which aims to invest in the recruitment, preparation, and continuous professional development and retention of a diverse network of excellent educators, teachers, education support professionals, and school leaders who are supported in applying the knowledge, skills, and disposition of a professional educator.

- RIDE developed the Educate 401 campaign to recruit educators to work in Rhode Island LEAs.

- RIDE has a partnership with the Yale Center for Emotional Strategies, which offers an eight-module Coursera course on strategies for emotional stability in uncertain times.

- The Wellness in Education Leads to Learning (WELL) Initiative offered up to $150,000 for districts to purchase wellness furniture for teachers and students and $5,000 to conduct aligned professional development.

> "I've spent a lot of time one-on-one with teachers who are really struggling with what's happening in their classroom with the kids who are exhibiting some trauma signs and symptoms. It's been more difficult for me to support them than it has been to support my people doing the therapeutic work because they're feeling quite helpless and hopeless. The resources just aren't there to support the teachers doing the work. You can't teach in that environment. It's been daunting to see how they're expected to juggle so many things, of being able to meet the needs, follow the curriculum, get the scores where they need to be for their district."
>
> — FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Action E Subject to Available Resources: Collaborate With the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to Expand the Reach of Medicaid Services to Cover Mental Health Service for Students Who Are Medicaid-Eligible Regardless of Individualized Education Program (IEP) Status

To advance equity, states, districts, and schools must serve the whole person and whole community. One way to do so is through wraparound supports. Wraparound in schools is a comprehensive team approach to addressing the diverse needs of students by coordinating various services and resources within the school and from the outside community (National Wraparound Initiative, 2019). Wraparound aims to provide holistic assistance to students and their families, considering factors such as academics, behavior, mental health, physical health, and well-being. Funding remains a significant obstacle to implementing wraparound supports (Heinrich et al., 2023). Many school districts establish partnerships with federally qualified health centers, local government agencies, universities, Medicaid providers, community-based organizations, and/or

foundations to help finance school-based health care programs (Dunfee, 2020). Medicaid reimbursement offers an important potential source of financial support for wraparound supports. Reimbursable services may include medical care, mental health care, dental care, health education, and substance abuse counseling (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2023).
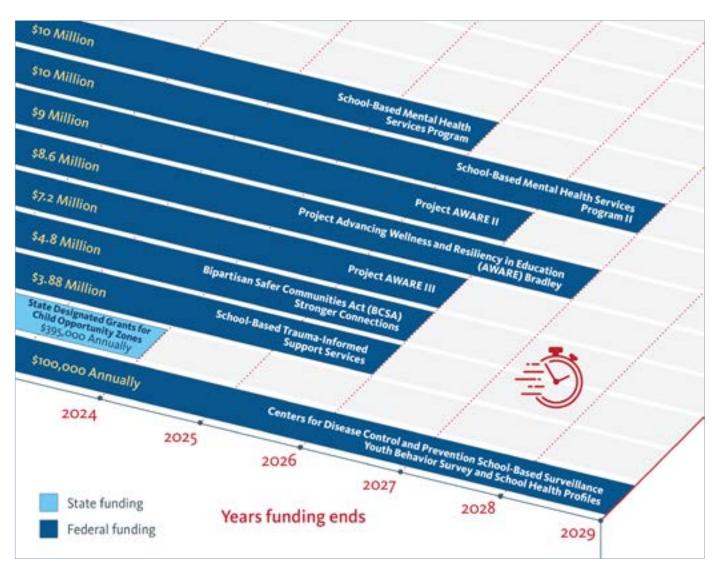
Existing Initiatives Aligned With This Action

- The School Health Model for Academics Reaching All and Transforming Lives (SMART) school-based health center is an existing commissioner's initiative with established health clinics in five schools and plans for more in the coming years.

- About 83 percent of school districts in Rhode Island are currently participating in Medicaid billing programs.

- The RIDE Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports is working with the EOHHS on Medicaid expansion, including a pending grant to support the EOHHS and RIDE with Medicaid expansion.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

State, Federal, and Philanthropic Sources That Align With the Purpose of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act

As required by the legislation, the Commission developed a catalog of state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources that align with the purpose of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act. A key finding from this effort is that RIDE has demonstrated commendable resourcefulness in acquiring external funding from federal entities to support trauma-informed practices. However, the existing grant funding is time limited, earmarked for specific purposes, and insufficient to cover programs in schools statewide. Figure 1 summarizes the funding sources that currently support trauma-informed schools work in Rhode Island and the anticipated funding cliffs in 2026 and 2027 (see Appendix C for a full list of resources, timelines, and restrictions).

Figure 1. Current Federal and State Funding With Amounts and Timelines

RIDE
Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Additionally, the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds are ending at the end of the 2024 calendar year. Rhode Island received $415,015,610 in ESSER funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). School districts have significant latitude in how they budget and expend ESSER funds, and many school districts in Rhode Island are using these funds to support school-based counselors and other activities that align with the purpose of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act (Schwartz et al., 2023).

As Figure 1 makes clear, state and local efforts specific to trauma-informed practices have been paid for through federal grant funding totaling nearly $54 million. Of this funding, 60%–70% has been distributed directly to school districts. Nearly all of Rhode Island's federal funding to support this work will expire by 2027, leaving only a small amount ($395,000 annually) of state-designated, nonrecurring funds distributed to just 10 school districts to fund a full service community school model.

At the state level, the School Health and Extended Learning team in the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports is supported almost entirely by the time-limited federal dollars shown in Figure 1. By securing seven federal grants, RIDE has been able to hire time-limited staff to support districts in the implementation of behavioral health and school climate efforts within an MTSS framework. The grant funding for these positions will expire in 2026 and 2027. Although the state has secured more than $53 million in federal funds, there are no resources from the state's general budget to support this work beyond an associate director position and a school health specialist position, which each have 25 percent of their full-time equivalent paid for through state funding to address state-level work. The duties of the associate director and school health specialist go well beyond the parameters envisioned in this Report.

Resources Required to Implement the Recommendations

State- and local-level capacity to support this work over the long term and at all schools is essential. The public input survey indicated that funding is the top concern of school leaders and staff. When federal funding sources expire, a transition to a recurring, sustainable funding source of state allocations would be necessary to maintain a basic state infrastructure to support this work and implement any new initiatives, such as those described in this Report.

RIDE would require sustained funding to successfully carry out efforts proposed by the Commission. The work could include, but is not limited to,

- applying lessons learned from school districts currently covered under the grants to other school districts in the state;

- identifying and applying for additional grants that align with the purpose of the Act; and

- planning and implementing actions B, C, and D described above.

Implementing Action A would require targeted and strategic planning efforts to determine what infrastructure and systems are needed for a comprehensive professional development strategy in Rhode Island. For Action A, RIDE may consider conducting a cost analysis to determine what additional costs are required. The cost of implementing Action A would depend on many variables, including the following:

- the programmatic design of the professional learning and coaching model(s)

- the level of recurring state funding made available to support state and local work

- the need for external contractors to assist with state or local efforts

- the time commitments required from teachers and other staff for activities beyond their regular duties, such as participating in communities of practice

- the ability of school districts to leverage existing structures and personnel, such as MTSS coordinators, to support new initiatives

Additionally, as the Executive Office of Health and Human Services is currently working with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to expand the state's existing school-based health services through Medicaid, additional staff resources at RIDE may be necessary to support school districts in accessing Medicaid funds for eligible students. This expansion could involve reaching out to inform school districts about program changes and providing training and technical assistance for implementation.

In the absence of recurring state funding, RIDE would have to resort to securing one-time funds to hire outside contractors for short-term support to implement the recommendations described in this Report. However, the continuity of existing staff and their work is paramount for building upon existing structures in the state, such as the current professional development initiatives related to trauma-informed practices. There are significant limitations in how staffing is currently constructed.

Moving the Vision Forward

The Rhode Island Trauma-Informed Schools Act, RIGL 16-21-41, and establishment of the Trauma-Informed Schools Commission marked the first steps in examining the implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed practices in the state of Rhode Island. The landscape analysis conducted by the Commission highlights the great progress Rhode Island has made in establishing safe and supportive environments for students in the state. Similarly, the Commission's needs assessment and public input survey indicate support for the implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed practices in the state's schools. At the same time, however, interest holders expressed concerns related to funding and initiative overload.

While this Report, along with the Commission's Implementation Plan and Supporting Materials, can serve as a roadmap for lawmakers, state agencies, and interest holders moving forward, fully achieving implementation of trauma-informed schools will require changes in mindsets, intentions, and practices over a long period of time. Still, given the funding necessary to establish and sustain the work outlined in this Report, the Commission's recommendations outline a series of actions that will allow Rhode Island to understand the impacts of trauma and prioritize the safety and well-being of its students and school staff.

Want to Learn More About Trauma-Informed Practice Today?

System change takes time and resources, yet the children and adults working in Rhode Island schools have urgent needs. A list of resources available now for you and your school community begins on page 22 of this Report.

References

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). (2023). *Delivering services in school-based settings: A comprehensive guide to Medicaid services and administrative claiming*. https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/sbs-guide-medicaid-services-administrative-claiming-ud.pdf

Dunfee, M. N. (2020). School-based health centers in the United States: Roots, reality, and potential. *Journal of School Health*, *90*(8), 665–670. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12914

Freeman, B., Potente, S., Rock, V., & McIver, J. (2015). Social media campaigns that make a difference: What can public health learn from the corporate sector and other social change marketers? *Public Health Research & Practice*, *25*(2). https://doi.org/10.17061/phrp2521517

Heinrich, C. J., Colomer, A., & Hieronimus, M. (2023). Minding the gap: Evidence, implementation and funding gaps in mental health services delivery for school-aged children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *150*, 107023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107023

Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. (2020). Does teacher burnout affect students? A systematic review of its association with academic achievement and student-reported outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *105*, 101174. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101714

McLean, L., & Connor, C. M. (2015). Depressive symptoms in third-grade teachers: Relations to classroom quality and student achievement. *Child Development*, *86*(3), 945–954. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24696680

Motamedi, J. G., Leong, M., & Yoon, S. Y. (2017, October). Strategies for designing, implementing, and evaluating grow-your-own teacher programs for educators. REL Northwest. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/strategies-for-educators.pdf

National Wraparound Initiative. (2019, January). *Wraparound basics: Frequently asked questions*. https://nwi.pdx.edu/pdf/wraparound-basics.pdf

Schwartz, N., Donohue, K., Bolves, A. J., & Benitez, G. R. (2023). Tracking Rhode Island's COVID-19 recovery: A first look at districts' strategic staffing and personnel investments. Annenberg. https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/RI%20Staffing%20and%20Personnel%20Investments.pdf

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014, July). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

Thompson, A., Hollis, S., Herman, K. C., Reinke, W. M., Hawley, K., & Magee, S. (2021). Evaluation of a social media campaign on youth mental health stigma and help-seeking. *School Psychology Review*, *50*(1), 36–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1838873

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-Methodology-and-Table.pdf

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Walrond, N., & Romer, N. (2021). *Serving the whole person: An alignment and coherence guide for state education agencies*. WestEd. https://www.wested.org/resources/serving-the-whole-person-an-alignment-and-coherence-guide-for-state-education-agencies/

Warner, S., & Browning, A. (2021). *What are social and emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining education—and what do they have to do with critical race theory? A primer*. WestEd.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Acknowledgments Page (in alphabetical order by last name)

Trauma-Informed Schools Commission

Vivian Acevedo, Director of Social Work, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center*

Darlene Allen, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Adoption Rhode Island

Rebecca Boxx, Executive Director, Children and Youth Cabinet of Rhode Island

Paige Clausius-Parks, Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Sarah Courtemanche-O'Brien, Assistant Principal, Smithfield High School*

Jennifer Culpepper, School Social Worker, Rogers High School*

Kayla David, Vice President, Family Service of Rhode Island

Frank Flynn, President, Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals

Dale Folan, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, Providence Public Schools

Gregory Fox, Physician, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Sandra Lopes, Chief Equity and Diversity Officer, Rhode Island Department of Education

Katelyn Medeiros, Child Advocate, Rhode Island Office of the Child Advocate

Margaret R. Paccione-Dyszlewski, Director, Clinical Innovation, Bradley Hospital and Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Brown University

Gina Picard, Superintendent, Chariho Regional School District*

*Served a partial term on the Commission

Rhode Island Department of Education

Elizabeth Cruz, Associate Chief of Staff, Commissioner's Office

Ayisha Gbolashere, School Health Policy and Program Specialist, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports

Angélica Infante-Green, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Kaelyn Phelps, Legal Counsel and Hearing Officer

Rosemary Reilly-Chammat, Associate Director, School Health and Extended Learning, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports

Kelvin Roldán, Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation

Veronica Salas, Associate Chief of Staff, Systems Transformation

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

WestEd

Angela Chin

Shannon McCullough

Yessy Medina

Christina Pate

Theresa Pfister

Tye Ripma

Bersabell Yeshitla

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Appendix A: Findings From the Landscape Analysis and Needs Assessment

The legislation required the Commission to review and assess existing trauma-informed school- and community-based resources and initiatives across the state and identify existing resources, organizations, funding sources, and data sources to support implementation of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act in Rhode Island. The Commission conducted a landscape analysis and a needs assessment to meet this charge. The following points summarize some of the main strengths of the existing trauma-informed efforts and areas for improvement:

- Rhode Island has been highly successful in securing external funding from federal sources to support trauma-informed schools and the well-being of students and staff, and many schools are in the process of implementing trauma-informed practices. However, the existing grant funding is time limited, earmarked for specific purposes, and insufficient to cover programs in schools statewide. The capacity to support this work at all schools is essential.

- Rhode Island has a strong network of youth-serving organizations dedicated to enhancing children's school experiences. The analysis identified 81 organizations offering services aligned with trauma-informed schools, including offering alternative learning options, community and family support, and university-based training.

- The state has more resources and initiatives aimed at Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (intensive) services compared with Tier 1 (universal) policies and practices. There is a particular shortage of resources for trauma-informed disciplinary policies, nondiscriminatory discipline practices, and school planning.

- Rhode Island offers technical assistance to the field through a variety of state-approved guidance and resources and through trainings offered by various organizations. Focus group participants highlighted the need for ongoing professional development to effectively implement trauma-informed approaches across districts, schools, and communities in Rhode Island. They also emphasized the importance of stronger family and community engagement for enhancing student achievement and wellness outside the classroom.

- Focus group participants reported that counselors and social workers are overwhelmed with high caseloads and multiple responsibilities. Attention to the roles and responsibilities of school-based mental health professionals could ensure that existing staff can share their expertise. Building up the workforce, based on need, is necessary. Participants agreed that a trauma-informed teaching workforce would be most effective.

- Focus group participants reported that teachers and other school staff are leaving the Rhode Island education workforce to seek employment in neighboring states with higher salaries.

- RIDE lacks the resources and capacity to support trauma-informed schools statewide without a significant long-term investment from elected officials. This work is a critical part of state-level work connected to district and school improvement.

Landscape Analysis Process

The landscape analysis occurred in three phases:

1. A systematic online search using key terms from the Trauma-Informed Schools Act (e.g., "trauma-informed schools," "mental health")

2. An analysis of the findings for relevance and quality

3. A process of feedback and revision to add further resources, organizations, funding sources, and data sources as suggested by Commission members and RIDE staff

Landscape Analysis Search Protocol

The WestEd team used the following protocol to conduct the landscape analysis:

1. Identify search terms based on key phrases from the Trauma-Informed Schools Act: "trauma-informed school," "suicide prevention," "education funding," "positive behavioral interventions," "restorative practices."

2. Search terms on Google with "Rhode Island" (e.g., "Rhode Island trauma-informed school").

3. Compile sources that align with the Trauma-Informed Schools Act, including but not limited to sources on trauma, education, mental health, suicide prevention, and social and emotional learning (SEL).

4. Look through sources to do the following:

   a. Categorize the site *type* (i.e., organization, program, resource, funding source, or data source).

   b. Identify the *focus* of the site (e.g., trauma support services, school-based mental health).

   c. Highlight any *trauma-specific* content (e.g., trainings on trauma, trauma-informed school policies).

   d. Use software to draft a *summary* of the site, its mission, and its offerings, typically through the "About Us" webpage. Review the output for accuracy.

   e. Categorize sites based on the following characteristics: Rhode Island versus national, public versus limited access, associated schools and districts.

   f. Organize the resources by *theme* (i.e., capacity-building resources, research and data sources, funding sources, and organizations).

5. Select and organize standout sources to provide a snapshot for the Commission of what capacity-building resources, research and data sources, funding sources, and organizations exist within Rhode Island.

6. Summarize trends across sources.

Although the team made every effort to ensure that this was an exhaustive search, it is possible that the landscape analysis is incomplete given the sheer volume of potential related resources in Rhode Island.

Summary of Landscape Analysis

Overall, there are an impressive number of resources and organizations doing work that aligns with the Trauma-Informed Schools Act. The initiatives and resources we have identified cover the following areas of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act:

- building capacity for understanding trauma
- positive school climate
- referrals

There are 27 initiatives that provide capacity-building resources, primarily in the form of trainings. These covered subjects ranging from equity (1), mental health (4), MTSS (1), trauma and ACEs (3), trauma-informed schools (16), and suicide prevention (2).

There are 20 research and data sources. The organizations include the Rhode Island Department of Health (2), Rhode Island Department of Education (10), Prevention Resource Center (1), and various technical assistance providers and evaluators (7).

We identified 81 organizations that provide services that align with trauma-informed schools. These organizations' offerings included services related to alternative learning environments (8); comprehensive community and family supports (13); early childhood learning (3); faith-based organizations (3); gender-affirming health care (5); legal resources (1); LGBTQ+ support (6); mental health (16); psychiatric care in hospitals (3); SEL (1); substance use prevention and treatment (3); suicide prevention (3); university-based training (3); serving vulnerable populations including children and youth with disabilities (4), foster care and adoption services (3), housing and homelessness (3), and survivors of abuse or violence (2); and youth empowerment (1).

Potential Opportunities

The landscape analysis identified several potential opportunities for growth in Rhode Island. First, current initiatives aligned with the purpose of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act are funded nearly entirely by time-limited federal grants. Although the landscape analysis identified one initiative that bridges funders, researchers, and residents, the lack of state funding is an area of potential growth in Rhode Island.

Additionally, the landscape analysis found little publicly available documentation of culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed disciplinary policies and nondiscriminatory discipline. One program published its progressive discipline policies online, but most organizations did not disclose their approach to discipline. Thus, the landscape analysis was not able to confirm whether schools have adopted culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed discipline policies. Aligning approaches to discipline with the purposes of the Trauma-Informed Schools Act is another potential area of growth in Rhode Island.

Finally, the landscape analysis found fewer school planning sources than compared with other sources. Most resources and organizations offered either trainings or technical assistance for implementation rather than planning.

Sources Identified in the Landscape Analysis

The following tables include the sources most relevant and aligned to the Commission's purpose. They are organized into the following categories:

1. *Capacity-Building Resources*. These resources are a collection of guides, toolboxes, websites, trainings, online modules, and programs that help to develop capacity of educators and staff.

2. *Research and Data Sources*. These resources include not only RIDE's extensive data sources but other organizations that are collecting and analyzing data on the well-being of children and youth in Rhode Island.

3. *Funding Sources*. These sources include the money already assigned and potential sources of future funding.

4. *Organizations*. The largest of the categories, this list includes dozens of organizations doing very important and aligned work with children, youth, families, and communities in Rhode Island. Subcategories range from alternative learning environments to mental health supports and those that specifically support vulnerable populations.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Capacity-Building Resources

Equity

Resource Name	Description	Link
Equity Institute	Root cause equity analysis, learning labs, antiracism labs	https://theequityinstitute.org/learning-labs

Mental Health

Resource Name	Description	Link
American Federation of Teachers Mental Health Hub	List of resources and tools to support mental health	https://www.aft.org/health-hub/mental-health
Bradley Learning Exchange at Bradley Hospital	Includes programs and resources for education and training in behavioral health care, such as evidence-based practices and mental health	https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/bradley-learning-exchange Bradley Conference: https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/bradley-conference Center for Evidence-Based Practice: https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/center-evidence-based-practice Mental Health First Aid: https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/mental-health-first-aid
Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH)	Provides "Take Charge of Your Behavioral Health," a guide for transition-aged youth	http://osticc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/November-2018_RIYOUTHTRANSITIONGUIDE12-13-18.pdf
Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence	10-hour course—"Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress"	https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/services/community-and-schools-programs/center-for-emotional-intelligence/course/social-and-emotional-learning-course/

MTSS Training

Resource Name	Description	Link
BRIDGE-RI	The "home of MTSS" in Rhode Island—designed for online learning	https://www.mtssri.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Suicide Prevention Training

Resource Name	Description	Link
Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act of 2021	Requires training of teachers, students, and school personnel regarding suicide awareness and prevention, and the establishment of a conflict resolution process between teachers or school personnel and students	https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/health-safety/school-mental-wellness-resources
Prevent Suicide Rhode Island	Offers suicide prevention trainings for K–12 staff	https://preventsuicideri.org/resources/resources-for-school-staff-k-12/

Trauma/ACEs Training

Resource Name	Description	Link
Changing Minds	Provides resources and tools to help better understand childhood trauma	https://changingmindsnow.org/resources/
Community Resilience Initiative	Provides trainings and certifications	https://criresilient.org/training/
Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACEs) Connection	Provides blog posts, videos, and trainings	https://www.acesconnectioninfo.com/

Trauma-Informed Schools Training

Resource Name	Description	Link
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Professional Development	AFT members can attend virtual workshops, including those on trauma-informed strategies for teaching	https://www.aftpd.org/program/summerpd
Brazelton Touchpoints Center	Comprehensive trauma-informed trainings, programs, and services	https://www.brazeltontouchpoints.org/
CA OSG Safe Spaces	Online 2-hour modules for three age groups: birth–5, 5–11, and 12–18	https://osg.ca.gov/safespaces/
Center for Advanced Practice at Adoption Rhode Island	Offers training and education, consultation and coaching, technical assistance, curriculum building, and more	https://thecenter-ari.org/
Center for Whole Child Education at Arizona State University (formerly Turnaround)	Offers evidence-based tools for educators and professional learning services with a whole-child design	https://turnaroundusa.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Children and Youth Cabinet of Rhode Island (CYCRI)	Offers programs and resources such as "Trauma 101 Training" and "Pivot2Prevention: A Toolbox for School-Based Mental Health"	Programs: https://cycri.org/our-programs/ Resources: https://cycri.org/our-resources/
Crisis Prevention Institute	Trauma-Informed Care for Educators	https://institute.crisisprevention.com/EDTraumaInformedCare.html/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=egp&utm_content=NCI-ED-TOFU-TIC-Search&gad=1
Echo	Offers online training and support, including trauma-informed, compassionate classrooms	All courses: https://www.echotraining.org/online-courses/ Trauma-informed classroom course: https://www.echoparenting.org/traumainformed-classrooms/
Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI)	Offers in-person and virtual trainings such as Youth Mental Health First Aid	https://www.familyserviceri.org/
The First Book Trauma Toolkit	Offers a toolkit to support educators in working with students who have experienced trauma	https://firstbook.org/blog/2019/06/27/educator-resource-the-first-book-trauma-toolkit/
Flourish Agenda	Provides strategies, trainings, and tools for healthy youth development	https://flourishagenda.com/
Healthy Environment and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS)	Collaborates with school systems to build capacity for trauma-informed practices, procedures, and policies	https://hearts.ucsf.edu/program-overview

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
National Education Association (NEA)	Offers resources related to trauma-informed instruction	Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Addressing%20the%20Epidemic%20of%20Trauma%20in%20Schools%20-%20NCSEA%20and%20NEA%20Report.pdf Teaching Children From Poverty and Trauma: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/NEAPovertyTraumaHandbook.pdf Trauma-Sensitive Schools Require Whole School Transformation: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Trauma_SensitiveSchools_WholeSchool_Transformation.pdf Understanding Trauma—Key Takeaways: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/UnderstandingTrauma_Key_Takeaways.pdf Know Me, Know My Name: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Know-me-know-my-name-plan.pdf MSEA/Firstbook Trauma Toolkit for Educators: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/MSEA-Trauma-Toolkit-for-Educators.pdf Virtual Calming Room: https://sites.google.com/view/nearivirtualcalmingroom/home
Rhode Island Federation of Teachers Professional Development	Virtual professional development offerings on trauma-informed teaching	https://sites.google.com/riilsr.org/riftpddl/virtual-pd-sessions
Rhode Island Prevention Resource Center (RIPRC)	Provides a trauma-sensitive schools e-learning module	https://www.riprc.org/elearning/trauma-sensitive-schools/#/
Tides Family Services	Day-school program with progressive disciplinary policies	https://www.tidesfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Student-Handbook-Update.pdf

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Research and Data Sources

Department of Health

Resource Name	Description	Link
Health Equity Measures	Provides a statewide standard for assessing progress toward health equity	https://health.ri.gov/data/healthequity/
Youth Risk Behavior Survey	Information and resources on the survey developed to monitor health behaviors in youth	https://health.ri.gov/data/adolescenthealth/

Rhode Island Education Data

Resource Name	Description	Link
Enrollment, Dropout, and Graduation Data	Statewide reports on enrollment, dropout, and graduation data	https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/enrollment-graduation-data
Frequently Requested Education Data (FRED)	Publicly available data requested by schools, researchers, policymakers, and more	https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/frequently-requested-education-data-fred
RI Data Hub–Data Mining	Brings together data sets from multiple federal, state, and local sources	https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/ri-datahub-data-mining
School and District Report Cards	Platform that allows students, educators, and families to see their school community report cards	https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/school-district-report-cards
Statistical Reports	Statistical reports on RI school outcomes, such as graduation rates	https://www.eride.ri.gov/reports/default.asp
SurveyWorks	Provides school climate data	https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/surveyworks
Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA)	Provides transparency around school and district financial information	https://ride.ri.gov/funding-finance/school-district-financial-data/uniform-chart-accounts
Youth Experience Survey (YES)	Information and data on the YES piloted in Providence Schools	https://www.providenceschools.org/Page/3015

Rhode Island Prevention Resource Center

Resource Name	Description	Link
Rhode Island Student Survey (RISS)	Provides information and resources related to the RISS	https://www.riprc.org/resources/2022-rhode-island-student-survey-riss-report/

Technical Assistance Providers/Evaluators

Resource Name	Description	Link
DCYF Data Analytics, Evaluation, and Continuous Quality Improvement	Office at the Department of Children, Youth, and Families that coordinates data analysis on families and children	https://dcyf.ri.gov/data-analytics
Department of Behavioral Health Care, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals	Provides a report of an assessment conducted to determine the needs of Rhode Island's health care system	https://bhddh.ri.gov/esh-revitalization-project-needs-assessment
Department of Health—Youth Risk Behavior Survey	Information and resources on the survey developed to monitor health behaviors in youth	https://health.ri.gov/data/adolescenthealth/
Department of Health and Human Services—Children's Behavioral Health System of Care	Data, reports, and meeting minutes for a network of work groups in the Children's Behavioral Health System	https://eohhs.ri.gov/initiatives/childrens-behavioral-health-system-care
Rhode Island Kids Count	Data and information-based advocacy, aiming to achieve equitable policies for RI children	https://www.rikidscount.org/
STAR (Stress, Trauma, and Resilience) Initiative	Fosters transdisciplinary collaborations within Brown University, enhances partnerships with local, community stakeholders, and affects policy	https://www.brown.edu/initiatives/star/about-star-initiative
STAR COBRE Center	Research center that aims to be a national hub for mechanisms of risk and resilience	https://www.brown.edu/initiatives/star/about/star-cobre-stress-trauma-and-resilience

Organizations

Alternative Learning Environments

Resource Name	Description	Link
Bradley Schools	Private, school-funded programs for children and adolescents whose psychiatric and behavioral needs cannot be met by public schools	https://www.bradleyschool.org/
Devereux School	Private, special needs day school	https://www.devereux.org/site/SPageServer/?pagename=ma_therapeuticschool

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Eleanor Briggs Schools	Specialized school designed for children whose behavioral and emotional difficulties impede their progress in public school	https://www.thrivebhri.org/programs-services/eleanor-briggs-school-
George N. Hunt Campus School	K–12 special education school with small class sizes and personalized instruction for students with learning, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges	https://www.smhfc.org/campus-school/
Harmony Hill School	Private, nonprofit, residential mental health facility with on-campus school for biological males 13–18 years of age	https://harmonyhillschool.net/residential-trtmt-program
Mount Pleasant Academy	Private, preK–8 general and special education school for children with emotional or behavioral challenges	https://mountpleasantacademy.org/
The Spurwink School	Year-round special education program that offers academic and therapeutic services to 40 students	https://www.thespurwinkschool.org/about-us
Tides Schools	Provides therapeutic and academic programs for all students grades 5–12	https://www.tidesfs.org/education

Comprehensive Community and Family Supports

Resource Name	Description	Link
Cedar Family Center Services	Provides family-centered coordination of services for children and youth with special health care needs	https://eohhs.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur226/files/2021-04/Cedar%20Fact%20Sheet%208.19.pdf
Child and Family Rhode Island	Provides information about the Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP) that supports children and families facing homelessness, abuse and neglect, and psychiatric hospitalization	https://childandfamilyri.org/our-services/family-care-community-partnership-fccp/
Children's Friend	Offers information and resources for programs such as Head Start and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	https://www.cfsri.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Communities for People	Provides information and the referral form for the FCCP, which works with community partners to help prevent child abuse and neglect and juvenile delinquency	https://www.communities-for-people.org/fccp/
Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)	Partners with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth	https://dcyf.ri.gov/
East Bay Community Action Program	Provides support to children from birth through age 25 through programs such as KIDS CONNECT and the Youth Center	https://www.ebcap.org/children-youth-services/ KIDS CONNECT Behavioral Health: https://www.ebcap.org/programs/kids-connect-behavioral-health/ Youth Center: https://www.ebcap.org/programs/youth-centers/
Family Service of RI	Provides services to support children and families experiencing poverty, family instability, and physical or emotional stress	https://www.familyserviceri.org/ Programs: https://www.familyserviceri.org/programs/ Trauma Systems Therapy: https://www.familyserviceri.org/programs/trauma-systems-therapy-community/ School-Based Mental Health: https://www.familyserviceri.org/programs/school-based-mental-health/
Nonviolence Institute	Offers trainings, programs, and services that aim to nonviolently prevent, interrupt, and heal violence	https://www.nonviolenceinstitute.org/
Ocean State Trauma- Informed Community Coalition (OSTICC)	Community organization that promotes understanding of trauma-informed approaches	https://osticc.org/
Parent Support Network of Rhode Island	Provides resources to support families with mental health and substance abuse challenges	https://psnri.org/
Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN)	Supports parents of children with special health care or educational needs through a peer model and exchanging resources and information	https://ripin.org/about/
State of Rhode Island—Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)	News and resources for OCA and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families	http://www.child-advocate.ri.gov/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Tri-County Community Action Agency	Offers a broad range of services and programs such as Head Start, Emergency Services, and Prevention Programs	https://www.tricountyri.org/

Early Childhood Learning

Resource Name	Description	Link
Early Intervention Program	State program that provides comprehensive early intervention services to eligible children and families	https://eohhs.ri.gov/Consumer/FamilieswithChildren/EarlyIntervention.aspx
Early Learning RI	Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Rhode Island	https://www.earlylearningri.org/parents-families/ri-head-start-early-head-start%C2%A0programs
Rhode Island Head Start Association	Information on locating and accessing Head Start programs across the state	https://www.riheadstartassociation.org/

Faith-Based Organizations

Resource Name	Description	Link
Board of Rabbis of Greater Rhode Island	A network of rabbis across the Jewish denomination who serve agencies and institutions	https://www.brgri.org/
Humanists of Rhode Island	Provides services, charity work, political action, and service to the community through a secular lens	https://www.humanistsri.com/
Rhode Island State Council of Churches	A network of church congregations that seeks to provide resources and services for the community	https://www.councilofchurchesri.org/

Gender-Affirming Health Care

Resource Name	Description	Link
Lifespan—Adult Gender and Sexuality Behavioral Health Program	Offers behavioral health services for adults exploring issues associated with gender identity or sexuality	https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/adult-gender-and-sexuality-behavioral-health-program
Lifespan—Adolescent Medicine: Hasbro Children's Hospital	Provides care and services for sexual and reproductive health, gender issues, and eating disorders for adolescents and young adults	https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/adolescent-medicine

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Open Door Health	Provides accepting and affirming primary and sexual health care services	https://odhpvd.org/
Thundermist Health Center	Provides culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services to the community	https://www.thundermisthealth.org/
Tri-County Community Action Agency—Health Center	Provides affirming and affordable comprehensive health care services for individuals and families	https://www.tricountyri.org/services/health-center/

Legal Resources

Resource Name	Description	Link
State of Rhode Island—Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)	News and resources for OCA and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families	http://www.child-advocate.ri.gov/

LGBTQ+ Support

Resource Name	Description	Link
Harvard Law School LGBTQ+ Clinic—Trans Youth Handbook	A legal resource guide for the rights of trans youth, including identity documents, school, health care, nonaffirming care environments, and work	https://hlslgbtq.org/trans-youth-handbook
PFLAG	Supports, educates, and advocates for LGBTQ+ people and communities	https://pflag.org/about-us/
PFLAG Greater Providence	Local chapter of PFLAG providing support, education, and advocacy for parents, families, friends, and allies of LGBTQ people across Rhode Island and neighboring states	https://www.pflagprovidence.org/
RI Trans* Health Initiative—Trans* Health Referral Guide	A guide supporting the need for coordinated and culturally competent health care for the transgender community	https://www.pflagprovidence.org/uploads/2/5/8/1/25814882/rithi_trans_health_referral_guide.pdf
Sojourner House	Provides culturally sensitive support, advocacy, housing, and education for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking	https://sojournerri.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Youth Pride Rhode Island	Youth Pride, Inc.'s mission is to meet the unique, ongoing needs of LGBTQ+ youth and young adults through direct service, support, advocacy, and education	https://www.youthprideri.org/

Mental Health

Resource Name	Description	Link
American Federation of Teachers	Offers trauma counseling to members	https://www.aft.org/benefits/trauma
Devereux: Advanced Behavioral Health	Nonprofit providing services, insight, and leadership in behavioral health care	https://www.devereux.org/site/SPageServer/?pagename=ma_index
East Bay Health Center	Provides family outpatient counseling, evaluation, and medication support	https://www.ebcap.org/center/east-bay-center-adams-farley-counseling-center/
Family Service of Rhode Island—Children's Mobile Crisis	A 24-7 hotline for youth experiencing a mental or behavioral health emergency	https://www.familyserviceri.org/programs/childrens-mobile-crisis/
Fellowship Health Resources	Provides behavioral health services for individuals with mental illness or addiction	https://www.fhr.net/
Interfaith Counseling Center	Provides mental health counseling, education, and advocacy to the community	https://interfaithri.org/
Key Program, Inc.	Offers comprehensive mental health and trauma-informed services, including counseling	https://www.key.org/
Kids' Link RI	A behavioral health triage service and referral network that is available 24-7	https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/kids-link-ri
Gateway Healthcare	Rhode Island's largest nonprofit behavioral health organization	https://www.lifespan.org/locations/gateway-healthcare
Mental Health Association of RI	Aims to promote mental health through advocacy, education, and policy development	https://mhari.org/resources/
Newport Community Mental Health Center	Provides mental health counseling and behavioral health services	https://www.newportmentalhealth.org/
Ocean State Trauma-Informed Community Coalition (OSTICC)—RI Healthy Transitions	Offers access to a comprehensive team of specialists for youth and young adults who are experiencing behavioral challenges	https://osticc.org/now-is-the-time-healthy-transitions/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
Rhode Island Student Assistance Services (RISAS)	Provides programs in schools to prevent substance use and promote mental health	https://risas.org/
The Providence Center	Provides mental health and substance use services	https://www.providencecenter.org/about
Thrive Behavioral Health Youth and Family Services	Provides a range of behavioral health services	https://www.thrivebhri.org/programs-services/youth-family-services
Thrive Healthy Transitions	Provides youth 16–25 experiencing mental health challenges access to service providers, housing, employment, education, and care	https://www.thrivebhri.org/programs-services/healthy-transitions

Psychiatric Care in Hospital Settings

Resource Name	Description	Link
Bradley Hospital	Psychiatric hospital for children	https://www.lifespan.org/locations/bradley-hospital
Butler Hospital	Services include addiction and rehabilitation, behavioral health, neurology, and emergency assessment	https://www.butler.org/
Hasbro Children's Hospital	Provides medical services for children	https://www.lifespan.org/locations/hasbro-childrens-hospital/about-hasbro-childrens-hospital

Social and Emotional Learning

Resource Name	Description	Link
Pure Edge, Inc.	Currently partnering with Rhode Island on SEL and offers free curriculum on compassionate schools	https://pureedgeinc.org/

Substance Use Prevention/Treatment

Resource Name	Description	Link
Rhode Island Prevention Resource Center (RIPRC)	Provides training, technical assistance, and capacity building for substance abuse prevention	https://www.riprc.org/
Rhode Island Regional Coalition	A network of members who provide substance use prevention strategies, mental health resources, and advocacy	https://riprevention.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
The Seven Challenges Program	Counseling program for treating substance use for youth 12–25	https://bhddh.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur411/files/documents/7C-Outpatient-Services-Brochure-4-sites-2021.pdf

Suicide Prevention

Resource Name	Description	Link
Prevent Suicide Rhode Island	Works to prevent suicide in Rhode Islanders up to age 24	https://preventsuicideri.org/
Rhode Island Youth Suicide Prevention Project (RIYSPP)	Offers free trainings to RI schools and communities in suicide prevention	https://risas.org/our-programs/youth-suicide-prevention/
The Samaritans of Rhode Island	Suicide prevention through services including statewide community outreach and crisis hotline	http://www.samaritansri.org/

University-Based Training

Resource Name	Description	Link
Rhode Island College School of Social Work	Offers Certificate of Graduate Studies in child and adolescent trauma	https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/school-social-work/school-social-work-certificate-programs/child-and-adolescent-trauma-cgs
The University of Rhode Island—Rhode Island Trauma-Sensitive Education Collaborative (RITSEC)	A public policy lab developing an online mini-curriculum to provide teachers with trauma-informed resources	https://web.uri.edu/ssirep/rhode-island-trauma-sensitive-education-collaborative-ritsec/

Vulnerable Populations: Children/Youth With Disabilities

Resource Name	Description	Link
Accessible RI	Site that lists accessible restaurants, museums, cinemas, cultural sites, and more	https://access-ri.org/
Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition	An RIDDC initiative that offers resources, publications, and presentations	https://www.ricrossdisability.org/about/
Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC)	Council with 24 members appointed by the governor to advocate, build capacity, and make systemic changes for individuals with developmental disabilities	https://riddc.org/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Resource Name	Description	Link
TechACCESS	Offers evaluations, consultations, trainings, tech support, and professional development	https://www.techaccess-ri.org/

Vulnerable Populations: Foster Care and Adoption Services

Resource Name	Description	Link
Adoption Rhode Island	Private nonprofit that serves adopted and foster children, vulnerable youth, and families	https://adoptionri.org/
The Center for Advanced Practice at Adoption Rhode Island	Knowledge hub for professionals serving foster and adopted children	https://thecenter-ari.org/
North American Family Institute (NAFI) Rhode Island	Offers residential, foster care, and community-based programs	https://www.nafiri.org/

Vulnerable Populations: Housing/Homelessness

Resource Name	Description	Link
Housing First RI	Connects people experiencing homelessness to permanent housing	https://www.thrivebhri.org/programs-services/housing-first-rhode-island
One Neighborhood Builders	Builds affordable housing and connects communities with affordable housing resources	https://oneneighborhoodbuilders.org/
Thrive Housing Services	Provides services to extremely low-income disabled individuals and families	https://www.thrivebhri.org/programs-services/housing-services

Vulnerable Populations: Survivors of Abuse/Violence

Resource Name	Description	Link
Day One	Provides treatment, intervention, education, advocacy, and prevention services	https://dayoneri.org/
St. Mary's Home for Children	Provides services to support those impacted by sexual abuse and trauma	https://www.smhfc.org/outpatient/

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Youth Empowerment

Resource Name	Description	Link
Young Voices	Nonprofit that provides leadership training to transform urban youth into advocates and to amplify youth voice in policymaking	https://www.youngvoicesri.org/

Needs Assessment

After the landscape analysis was conducted, Commission members explored existing state-level data related to trauma-informed approaches in schools, including school climate data from the 2023 SurveyWorks, to identify areas for further investigation through a needs assessment. The Commission determined the need to further explore interest holder perspectives on topics such as existing school policies and practices, barriers and facilitators to implementing a trauma-informed approach, and staff wellness. In October 2023, WestEd staff organized focus groups with approximately 40 participants total in Rhode Island, including

- one student focus group,

- one parent focus group,

- two educator focus groups,

- two service provider focus groups,

- two school and district leadership focus groups,

- two state leadership focus groups, and

- two community-based organization focus groups.

Example questions for the focus groups included the following:

- How familiar are you with trauma-informed approaches?

- What do you believe are the greatest supports and barriers your school, district, or state has that would help or hinder implementing trauma-informed schools?

- How does your workplace support the mental and physical well-being of you and your colleagues?

- What are the most pressing needs you see students and families facing?

Detailed Findings From the Needs Assessment

After the completion of the focus groups with interest holders, WestEd staff sent video recordings to rev.com for audio transcription. A transcript of each focus group was then uploaded into the qualitative software Dedoose for thematic analysis. Although the topic of each focus group question was initially used for categorizing responses, WestEd staff used open coding to break responses into distinct parts, or codes, and help identify themes.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Familiarization With Trauma-Informed Approaches and Training

All participants in the focus groups expressed at least a baseline understanding of trauma-informed approaches, with many having attended training to understand the prevalence and impact of trauma among young people. Although this may be due to selection bias, with focus group participants opting to participate in a discussion on trauma-informed schools, the landscape analysis results highlight the availability of related professional development opportunities in the state. Still, participants expressed the need for more ongoing, in-person training and feedback to provide school staff with actionable, culturally responsive, and sustaining trauma-informed practices to use in the classroom.

Barriers and Supports

When asked about the barriers to implementing trauma-informed approaches in Rhode Island's schools, focus group responses varied widely. However, several themes emerged while coding discussions with interest holders. First, state leaders, service providers, and educators regularly mentioned the challenge of finding funding or navigating the removal of resources (*28 mentions*), particularly funding to support professional learning related to trauma-informed approaches. Similarly, participants often discussed how lack of funding for human resources can lead to staff shortages (*21 mentions*) and increased workloads (*27 mentions*). This was a particular concern for state leaders, service providers, and students, who discussed the high caseloads of school nurses and school-based mental health professionals. When discussing workloads, participants often noted the limited time (*14 mentions*) available to dedicate to the many existing initiatives in schools.

Focus group participants also highlighted several existing efforts and strategies to improve the implementation of trauma-informed approaches in Rhode Island's schools. State leaders and service providers highlighted effective related trainings (*9 mentions*), such as Youth Mental Health First Aid and self-care workshops for educators, which have resulted in positive changes for students. These trainings have helped improve educator understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma, leading many schools to create safe spaces in classrooms and schools for students to access. Among the specific strategies discussed in the focus groups was the use of restorative approaches (*7 mentions*), which has resulted in positive changes for several schools.

Staff Well-Being

When asked how their workplace helps to support their well-being, most school staff indicated that attempts to improve educator well-being from school and district leaders were often unsuccessful, as they put the responsibility of well-being on the individual. As noted earlier, educators highlighted feelings of pressure and overwork with little support, which were only exacerbated by increasing academic demands and staff shortages. In addition to the need for increased staff to help reduce workloads, focus group participants indicated the need for state and school leadership to understand the daily challenges faced by school staff.

Appendix B: Public Input Survey

When accessing SurveyMonkey to participate in the public input survey, respondents were provided with a link to the Commission's recommendations and the Implementation Plan and Supporting Documents. Respondents were then given the option to provide contact information and identify their role.

The survey itself prompted respondents to answer a series of questions for each of the five recommendation areas, including the following:

- If implemented, how significant would this recommendation be for supporting trauma-informed practices in schools statewide?
  - » Options included *Not at all significant*, *Slightly significant*, *Moderately significant*, and *Very significant*.
- Please rank the potential actions for this area in order of priority, with the highest-priority action at the top.
- What are the potential benefits of this recommendation and actions? (Open-ended)
- What are the potential challenges of this recommendation and actions? (Open-ended)

The tables below indicate the percentage of respondents choosing each ranking, with 1 being the highest priority. Additional information regarding top public priorities has been highlighted in the body of the Report in the section titled "Insights From the Public on the Implementation Plan." The bolded actions are the highest-priority actions.

Note: table rows do not necessarily add up to 100%.

Recommendation A

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
RIDE could partner with institutions of higher education to develop standard educator competencies around culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed schools.	18%	24%	18%	12%	10%	4%	8%	4%	4%	0%
RIDE and LEAs could develop professional learning programs (e.g., workshops, online modules and courses, coaching sessions) that are aligned with established competencies and focus on building specific skills and knowledge required for culturally responsive and sustaining trauma-informed practices.	29%	18%	31%	6%	10%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Entities could invest state and district funds into developing the infrastructure and systems needed for a comprehensive professional development strategy (training, training of trainers, coaching, community of practice, etc.). Such infrastructure could facilitate communication, coordination, and collaboration.	29%	18%	20%	22%	0%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%
RIDE could explore stacked credential opportunities through career and technical education for young people who are interested in entering the field of education (teachers, school mental health professionals).	0%	8%	8%	24%	16%	10%	18%	12%	4%	2%
RIDE could promote coherence among new and existing grow-your-own staff programs in Rhode Island (Motamedi et al., 2017).	0%	2%	6%	4%	16%	20%	14%	14%	18%	8%
RIDE and LEAs could continue building awareness and reducing stigma through the Let It Out media campaign. Media campaigns can be effective in reducing mental health stigma and promoting behavior changes in educational contexts (Freeman et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2021).	0%	2%	0%	8%	16%	18%	10%	20%	10%	18%
RIDE and LEAs could celebrate wins and highlight best practices through awards, including for bright spots and exemplars.	0%	0%	0%	2%	6%	12%	20%	12%	12%	37%

Recommendation B

	1	2	3	4	5	6
RIDE could explore strategies to incorporate SurveyWorks school climate data into the statewide staff evaluation systems to underscore the link between students' sense of well-being in school and student achievement.	11%	11%	9%	7%	20%	41%
RIDE could review the Education Code to ensure that discipline policies align with a trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive approach.	52%	11%	16%	5%	11%	5%
LEAs could review and reflect on their practices and policies relating to discipline, considering the ways in which they orient toward punishment, responsive approaches, or a combination of discipline practices.	14%	41%	23%	16%	5%	2%
LEAs could evaluate discipline data annually for racial, ethnic, or special education disparities and develop a plan to eliminate those disparities as required under Rhode Island General Laws.	2%	11%	25%	27%	23%	11%

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

	1	2	3	4	5	6
RIDE and LEAs could integrate the content of capacity building (as outlined in Recommendation A) around trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive discipline. This includes building on existing coaching and training that supports crisis and verbal de-escalation and restorative and trauma-informed practices and that reduces hands-on intervention in schools.	14%	11%	11%	27%	20%	16%
RIDE and LEAs could establish organizational structures that promote trauma-informed, restorative, and responsive discipline.	7%	14%	16%	18%	20%	25%

Recommendation C

	1	2	3
With guidance from RIDE, LEAs could develop capacity-building programs for all interest holders involved in or with the school system, including leaders, teachers, staff, students, families, community partners, and policymakers.	31%	49%	20%
RIDE and LEAs could establish organizational structures that facilitate collaboration among students, staff, and families.	37%	23%	40%
RIDE and LEAs could establish organizational structures that facilitate the alignment of initiatives, policies, and procedures across different levels of the education system (state, region, district, school).	31%	29%	40%

Recommendation D

	1	2	3	4
RIDE could develop guidance for LEAs to develop programs that focus on building the capacity of staff and leaders to recognize and address well-being challenges. Programs might include those that focus on mental health awareness, stress management strategies, work–life harmony strategies, relational skills, coping skills, and so on. Ongoing professional development opportunities can ensure that staff continuously enhance their well-being competencies.	34%	24%	38%	3%
RIDE could develop programs that focus on building the capacity of leaders, school boards, unions, and policymakers to understand the importance of staff well-being and its effects on student and school outcomes. Such efforts would make these groups aware of resources and supports that staff need to effectively teach and lead and would make them aware of the systems and structures needed to support the well-being of all school interest holders (students, staff, families, and leaders).	41%	34%	21%	3%
With the guidance of RIDE, LEAs could establish (or leverage existing) organizational structures (e.g., District Health and Wellness Subcommittees) that are dedicated to promoting staff well-being.	14%	28%	28%	31%
With the guidance of RIDE and the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, LEAs could expand capacity to support school-based health services through the upcoming Medicaid Waiver Expansion.	10%	14%	14%	62%

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Recommendation E

	1	2	3
RIDE and LEAs could develop or adopt training that is aligned with established competencies and enhances the capacity of school staff (teachers, mental health professionals, leaders, support staff).	31%	38%	31%
RIDE and LEAs could establish organizational structures to support functions such as inter-agency and interdepartmental coordination and the development and sharing of resources, among others.	38%	14%	48%
RIDE could expand the reach of services by providing guidance to school districts on the various models to address physical and mental health and collaborating to expand the reach of Medicaid services.	31%	48%	21%

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Appendix C: Catalog of State, Federal, and Philanthropic Sources That Align With the Purpose of the Act

Name	Description	Funding Amount	Funding Type	Funding Ends
School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program	Increases the number of credentialed mental health services providers providing school-based mental health services to students in LEAs with demonstrated need	$10,000,000.00	U.S. Department of Education (Federal)	2025
School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program II	Increases the number of credentialed mental health services providers providing school-based mental health services to students in LEAs with demonstrated need	$10,000,000.00	U.S. Department of Education (Federal)	2027
Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE) II	Supports RIDE to develop innovative statewide initiatives to raise awareness among school personnel and the broader school community on the prevalence and effects of trauma on youth mental health and school performance, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic	$9,000,000	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (Federal)	2026
Project AWARE Bradley	Awarded to Bradley Hospital from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' SAMHSA, supports the hospital in participating in the Project AWARE partnership with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and RIDE	$8,600,000.00	SAMHSA (Federal)	2027
Project AWARE III	Supports RIDE in recruiting and retaining mental health service providers to further support student well-being	$7,200,000	SAMHSA (Federal)	2026

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Name	Description	Funding Amount	Funding Type	Funding Ends
Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) Stronger Connections Grant	Supports RIDE in establishing safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments	$4,800,000.00	U.S. Department of Education (Federal)	2026
School-Based Trauma-Informed Support Services Grant	Increases student access to evidence-based and culturally relevant trauma support services and mental health care by developing innovative initiatives, activities, and programs to link local school systems with local trauma-informed support and mental health systems	$3,880,000.00	SAMHSA (Federal)	2026
Rhode Island Opioid Stewardship funds	Supports forward-looking opioid abatement efforts, such as recovery and prevention	$590,000 annually	Other	Unknown, contingent on terms of settlement
State-Designated Grants for Child Opportunity Zones	Funding for full-service community schools through Child Opportunity Zones	$395,000 annually to support 10 districts	State	2024
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention School-Based Surveillance Youth Behavior Survey and School Health Profiles	Supports the dissemination of school-based surveillance data in partnership of Rhode Island's Department of Health	$100,000 annually	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Federal)	2029

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education