



School Supports for Mental Health Needs

(Bison Bridge Behavioral Insights Parent Resource — K–12 Edition)



Why Mental Health Support in School Matters

Mental health affects learning, attention, behavior, and relationships. Schools are not mental health clinics, but they play a critical role in recognizing needs and providing support during the school day.

This guide helps families understand what supports might be available and how to start the conversation with your child’s school.



Types of Mental Health Supports in School

1. General Education Supports (MTSS)

- Brief check-ins or mentoring from a trusted adult
- Behavior charts or regulation tools (calm-down spaces, visual supports)
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons taught in classrooms
- Positive behavior systems and school-wide mental health programs

2. 504 Plan Accommodations

- Extra breaks or movement opportunities
- Counseling support or designated safe spaces
- Reduced homework or alternative testing formats
- Permission to leave class when overwhelmed

3. IEP Services

- Individual or group counseling written into the IEP
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)
- Emotional regulation or social skills instruction
- Speech-language services for pragmatic language or communication needs

4. Crisis or Safety Planning

- Short-term supports for students in emotional crisis
- Risk assessments and safety agreements developed with school teams
- Re-entry plans following a mental health-related absence or hospitalization

5. Referrals to Outside Providers

- Schools may connect families to outside therapists, school-based mental health programs, or community agencies
 - Some schools have therapists or case managers on-site through partnerships
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How to Start the Conversation

- Share what you are seeing at home (mood changes, worry, shutdowns, behavior shifts)
 - Ask if similar things are happening at school
 - Say: “I’m wondering what supports are available to help my child manage stress/emotions/behavior.”
 - You can request a 504 meeting or IEP evaluation in writing at any time
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What Parents Say

- “Once we had a plan in place, my child felt safer coming to school.”
 - “The breaks and check-ins helped him stay in class longer.”
 - “I didn’t know schools could do this until I asked.”
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Parent Reflection Space

- What changes have I noticed in my child’s emotions or behavior?
 - What strategies help my child feel calm, safe, or focused?
 - What support do I need as a parent to stay informed and involved?
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Important Reminder



Mental health support in school should be proactive, respectful, and strengths-based. You don't need a formal diagnosis to ask for help. You are your child's advocate — and you have the right to be heard.

To learn more, visit www.ksde.org or talk with your school counselor, social worker, or special education team.