

## Mental Health Policy for: MATCH CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

### **Preface:**

Match Charter Public School (“Match”) is committed to supporting the mental health of all members of the Match community, including students, parents, families and staff (hereinafter referred to as the “Match community”). Match recognizes the necessity of collaborative and intentional efforts in order to achieve this mission. As such, the Executive Director, in consultation with school nurses, mental health professionals, leaders and other stakeholders as appropriate, will develop, and then critically evaluate and refine Match’s mental health support practices on an ongoing basis.

### **Statement of Protocol:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Match is a safe and healthy space for all Match community members, and to ensure that adequate mental health resources are readily available to the Match community. This policy will outline Match’s general mental health practices, as well as procedures to increase emergency preparedness. The protocols detailed below shall at all times be subject to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Massachusetts student records laws (603 CMR 23.00), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and any other relevant federal or state law.

### **Administrative Guidelines:**

Before September 1 of each year, Match shall review and update this Mental Health Policy in accordance with MGL c. 71 s. 37Q, prior to finalizing and releasing that year’s Employee Handbook.

## **A. General Mental Health Services**

- I. Student Support: Match believes that access to school-based mental health services and supports directly improves students’ physical and psychological safety, academic performance, cognitive performance and learning, and social–emotional development. Match staff will work to create and sustain a positive school environment.
  - a. Qualified school-based Licensed Mental Health Professionals, such as counselors, social workers, psychologists and/or nurses (“Mental Health Professionals”), will be contracted to provide services that are high-quality, developmentally appropriate, effective, and suitable to the school context.
  - b. Mental Health Professionals will provide initial and ongoing mental health trainings as needed to educate instructional staff on such topics as:
    - i. Creating and maintaining a safe and supportive school environment, with a particular focus on:
      1. Trauma Sensitive Classrooms
      2. Risk Assessment
      3. Mandated reporting requirements
      4. Common mental health challenges in child and adolescent populations; and

5. The types of situations in which staff should approach mental health professionals for resources and/or support.
  - c. Mental Health Professionals will also assist school leaders in efficiently deploying resources, ensuring coordination of services, evaluating the effectiveness of services, and adjusting supports to meet the individual needs of their students.
- II. Family Support: Match prioritizes engagement with parents and families to ensure that parents are involved in their child's education to the greatest extent possible. As such, many Match staff members have contact with students' families on a regular basis. Through this consistent contact, strong relationships are often built, which allows for staff members to informally support the general well-being of students, and to become aware of potential issues that may require intervention.
  - a. When possible, Mental Health Professionals will train staff on indicators of risk to be flagged in their communication with families.
  - b. When possible, Mental Health Professionals will consult with staff to share information on community resources that may be useful for families.
  - c. Staff will consult with Mental Health Professionals as needed to ensure appropriate response to situations that arise.
- III. Staff Support: Match strives to provide staff with a healthy and supportive work environment, as Match recognizes that the mental health of staff is vital to the overall school atmosphere, as well as to the achievement of Match's mission.
  - a. Supervisors shall check in with employees on a regular basis. Such meetings will be an opportunity for staff members to inform their supervisors of any potential workplace stressors or conflict, and for supervisors to offer support.
  - b. When possible staff members shall informally support one another, and should consult with Mental Health Professionals and Human Resources if there is reason to be concerned about the well-being of a fellow staff member.
  - c. All staff who qualify will have the option to access mental health services through Match's health insurance plan, as well as access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- IV. Referrals and Collaboration: When responding to challenging situations, if staff determine that supplemental expertise and/or resources would be beneficial, individuals should be referred to outside services.
  - a. When possible, school leaders will foster partnerships with community-based organizations to increase Match's ability to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources.

- b. Mental Health Professionals will provide guidance and support as needed throughout any referral process.
- c. In the past, Match has referred students and their families to services/organizations included in its [Community Resource Directory](#).

## **B. Response to Tragedy/Crisis/Emergency Plan**

- I. Development of an Action Plan: In the event of an unexpected tragedy or crisis that may induce a need for increased mental health services, school leaders will collaborate with Mental Health Professionals to assess the situation and implement an action plan to address the needs of the community. In addition to following any emergency procedures, such plans may involve the following components as determined by school leaders on a case-by-case basis:
  - a. A plan for both internal and external communication;
  - b. A means to increase access to services (e.g. temporarily increasing number of Mental Health Professionals on site);
  - c. A plan to provide reasonable accommodations for students who are significantly affected by the event;
  - d. An opportunity for Mental Health Professionals to provide training for staff on how to respond to specific questions/reactions from students and families, as well as a reminder of available resources; and
  - e. Other actions as determined by school leaders in collaboration with Mental Health Professionals.
- II. Child in Crisis: In the event a student experiences a behavioral or mental health crisis on school grounds, staff will make a determination to call Boston Emergency Services Team or call 9-1-1. If it is determined that the student can be evaluated by a mobile crisis team after school hours, a referral will be made to a crisis team in the students' community with the consent from the parent or guardian. Match will make reasonable efforts to contact the student's parents before calling to address an emergency. However, if school staff determine that delaying a call to emergency services would result in a risk of harm to the student or other students or staff members, a 9-1-1 call will be placed immediately. In that event, Match will make reasonable efforts to contact the student's parents after placing the call to emergency services.