

FORMAL PROGRAM MODEL DOCUMENT

The Student Therapy Access Project (STAP)

A School-Based Mental Health Access Model for Baltimore County

Program Model | Version 1.0

PAGE 1 — Executive Summary

The Student Therapy Access Project (STAP) is a youth-centered mental health organization committed to providing accessible, on-campus access to licensed therapists for both students and staff in participating schools. Our program aims to begin with middle schools—where early signs of depression, behavioral concerns, and academic struggles are often first seen—later expanding into high schools, with the long-term goal of serving students across the state and eventually the country.

We believe mental health care should be as normalized and expected as physical health care. Therefore, our mission includes advocating for legislation requiring annual mental health checkups for all public school students, fully funded by our donors, state and federal grants, corporate sponsors and legislative support. It's time for mental health screenings to be a standard school requirement—just like mandatory physicals—so that every student receives equal access to preventive care and early intervention.

Our program model is designed to:

- Increase accessibility to mental health care
- Reduce youth depression and anxiety
- Prevent crises through early intervention
- Lower behavioral incidents and youth-related crime
- Improve academic performance across Baltimore County
- Support school staff with confidential counseling resources
- Build safer, healthier, more resilient school communities

This Program Model Document outlines the structure, operations, staffing, protocols, goals, evaluation metrics, and long-term vision of our organization.

PAGE 2 — Problem Statement

The Youth Mental Health Crisis in Baltimore County

Baltimore County students are experiencing increasing levels of stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, and behavioral challenges. School counselors are often overwhelmed, with caseloads ranging from 350–700 students per counselor, making one-on-one mental health support nearly impossible. Teachers and staff are simultaneously navigating workplace stress, burnout, and secondary trauma.

Key Issues Identified:

- Lack of accessible, on-site mental health resources for students
- Insufficient early intervention, resulting in crises and disciplinary escalation
- Rising youth depression, self-harm, and anxiety
- Increased behavioral issues due to untreated emotional challenges
- Academic decline, including low testing averages and disengagement
- School staff under strain with limited support
- Youth involvement in crime and violence increasing in some areas

Impact on Schools

Without consistent mental health support:

- Students suffer in silence
- Teachers lose instructional time due to behavior disruptions
- Administrators struggle to handle crises
- Families lack community-based mental health resources

The Gap

Baltimore County schools are not systematically equipped to address the mental health needs of every student — and this unmet need directly affects academic achievement, graduation rates, safety, and long-term outcomes.

Our model exists to close this gap.

PAGE 3 — Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission Statement

The Student Therapy Access Project (STAP) is committed to providing accessible, on-campus access to licensed therapists for both students and staff, beginning with middle schools in Baltimore County, expanding into high schools, and ultimately reaching communities beyond the county. We strive to make mental health care a standard part of student wellness by advocating for legislation that mandates yearly mental health checkups, just as physical exams are required today. With funding from our donors, corporate sponsors, state and federal grants and legislative support, we believe with early intervention and consistent access to care we can reduce childhood depression, address behavioral concerns before they escalate, lower youth-related crime, and improve academic outcomes across Baltimore County's schools.

Our core values are accessibility and confidentiality: ensuring every student and staff member has someone to talk to when they need it, and guaranteeing a safe, private environment grounded in strict professional ethics and protected by confidentiality laws such as HIPAA and the Maryland Confidentiality of Medical Records Act.

Vision Statement

We envision a future where mental health care is a standard, normalized part of school life — where students receive support before crises occur, academic outcomes improve because emotional needs are met, and communities thrive as fewer youth fall into cycles of violence, trauma, or disengagement.

Core Values

Accessibility

Every student and staff member should have immediate access to mental health care, without barriers.

Confidentiality

All services are protected under HIPAA and Maryland privacy law, creating a safe environment for honesty and healing.

Equity

Services are provided regardless of background, income, or circumstance.

Prevention

We aim to stop emotional and behavioral struggles before they escalate.

Compassion

Our therapists are trained to support youth with patience, empathy, and understanding.

PAGE 4 — Program Overview

Program Purpose

To provide consistent, professional, on-campus mental health services that improve student well-being, academic performance, safety, and long-term outcomes.

Program Components

1. In-School Therapist Placement

- One licensed therapist per school (expanding based on caseload).
- Therapists are employed by The Student Therapy Access Project (STAP).
- Schools provide a private therapy space.

2. Student Services

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Crisis intervention
- Emotional regulation + coping skills development
- Trauma-informed therapy
- Conflict resolution and peer mediation
- Referrals when more intensive care is needed

3. Staff Services

- Confidential counseling
- Stress and burnout reduction programs
- Support for handling student trauma
- Crisis debriefing

4. Annual Mental Health Checkups

When legislation is passed:

- Every student undergoes a yearly mental wellness screening.
- Data is confidential and helps identify early intervention needs.

5. Family Engagement

- Optional participation with family consent
 - Referrals for family-based mental health support
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PAGE 5 — Service Delivery Model

How Students Access Services

- Self-referral
- Parent referral
- Teacher referral
- Administrator referral
- School counselor referral
- Walk-ins (as available)

No student is turned away.

Therapy Session Structure

- 45–60 minute individual sessions
- 30–45 minute small group sessions
- Crisis sessions as needed
- Regular weekly meetings for long-term cases

Confidentiality Protocols

All care follows:

- HIPAA
 - Maryland Confidentiality of Medical Records Act
 - Professional ethical guidelines
 - Encrypted digital health record systems
 - Strict privacy within schools (no sharing with teachers/admin without consent unless legally required)
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Crisis Response System

Therapists are trained to:

- Conduct risk assessments
 - Develop crisis safety plans
 - Notify guardians when required
 - Coordinate with school administration for emergencies
 - Connect students with external resources if hospitalization is needed
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PAGE 6 — Staffing Model

Therapist Qualifications

All therapists must be:

- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW, LCSW-C)
- Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors (LCPC)
- Licensed Psychologists

Additional qualifications:

- Youth counseling experience
 - Cultural competence
 - Trauma-informed training
 - Crisis intervention certification
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Staffing Ratios

Ideal ratio:

1 therapist per 150–200 students

As the program grows, schools with higher needs may receive additional therapists.

Training Requirements

Therapists undergo:

- Orientation to school laws, culture, and reporting requirements
 - Confidentiality and privacy training
 - Youth suicide prevention training
 - Crisis intervention training
 - Continuing education specific to school-based counseling
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Supervision Structure

- Clinical supervisor oversees all therapists
- Monthly group supervision
- Weekly check-in for new therapists
- Data oversight to ensure program quality

PAGE 7 — Implementation Plan

Year 1: Launch Phase

Months 1–3

- Hire program director and initial therapists
- Partner with 1–3 middle schools
- Prepare therapy spaces
- Develop training materials

Months 4–12

- Begin student and staff services
- Begin collecting baseline data
- Conduct mental health education for classrooms
- Hold monthly check-ins with school leadership

Year 2: Expansion Phase

- Add additional schools
 - Hire more therapists
 - Launch staff wellness programs
 - Begin legislative advocacy
 - Publish annual impact report
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Year 3+: Growth Phase

- Expand to all willing Baltimore County middle schools
 - Introduce high school programming
 - Implement annual mental health checkups once legally mandated
 - Develop statewide partnerships
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PAGE 8 — Evaluation & Data Collection

Key Outcomes Tracked

Student Outcomes

- Reduction in depressive symptoms
- Reduction in behavioral issues
- Improvement in attendance
- Increase in class engagement
- Academic test score improvements

School Outcomes

- Reduction in crisis incidents
- Reduction in disciplinary referrals
- Improved school climate
- Higher teacher retention

Long-Term Community Outcomes

- Lower youth crime
- Higher graduation rates
- Improved emotional resilience

Data Collection Tools

- Pre/post mental health assessments
 - School-reported behavior/attendance data
 - Therapist session logs
 - Anonymous student surveys
 - Annual program evaluation
 - Data dashboard for funders + schools
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PAGE 9 — Budget Overview

Cost Per School (Estimated)

- Therapist Salary: \$65,000–\$85,000
- Benefits: \$10,000–\$20,000
- Training + supervision: \$5,000
- Liability insurance: \$3,000
- Materials + supplies: \$2,000
- Administrative costs: \$8,000–\$15,000

Total Annual Cost Per School:

\$95,000–\$130,000

Funding Sources

- Foundations
- Corporate sponsors
- State and federal grants
- Medicaid billing (if applicable)
- Legislative support
- Donations

Long-term goal:

Full funding through mandated state legislation.

PAGE 10 — Sustainability Plan

To ensure long-term program success, we focus on:

1. Multi-Source Funding

No dependency on one funding stream.

2. Legislative Advocacy

Annual mental health checkups funded by the state will provide sustainable financial support.

3. Strong Partnerships

Collaboration with:

- Baltimore County Public Schools
- Local universities
- Hospitals
- Community organizations

4. Program Evaluation

Continuous data-driven improvement ensures funders trust the model.

5. Scalable Structure

The program can be replicated statewide and nationally.

PAGE 11 — Conclusion & Call to Action

The Student Therapy Access Project (STAP) is building a transformative model that ensures every student in Baltimore County — and eventually beyond — has reliable, accessible, compassionate mental health support directly within their school environment.

Our approach is not only a solution but a prevention system that will change the trajectory of thousands of young lives.

We invite educators, funders, policymakers, community leaders, and mental health professionals to join us in making mental health care a standard part of education — not a luxury.

Together, we can protect children, empower families, support school staff, and build a healthier future for Baltimore County and beyond.