

Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health Definition and Rationale

Definition/Description

Name of the Construct/“Content Area”: Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health (SEBH). This pulls behavioral well-being and mental health together into a single term.

Definition of (SEBH): Social, emotional, behavioral and mental well-being that affects how we think, feel, communicate, act, and learn. These contribute to resilience, how we relate to others, respond to stress and emotions, and make choices¹. Foundational knowledge and skills that promote SEBH include: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills² that support positive well-being and academic success.

Background and Rationale

There has been an increased focus across Iowa in recent years to meet the needs of our children's mental health and social-emotional well-being. Within the Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K) structure, we used the term “social-emotional-behavioral well-being and mental health” to cast a wide, inclusive net to start organizing and describing the work occurring within C4K. However, there was no consistent definition used for this term, making it difficult to have precise conversations and work in this area. The C4K Development Work Team was charged with determining what term and definition would be used in our work together.

The term and definition above was a result of a seven month process of development and vetting with key stakeholder groups. There were two main sources of information used, in addition to stakeholder input, to develop the term and definition.

First were significant policies recently passed in Iowa. In particular was House File 690, which was passed during the legislative session in 2019. In this bill, the system of support for children was defined as one providing behavioral health services. This was in part informed by the strategic plan developed by the Children's Board, which favored the term “behavioral health” over “mental health” because they considered it more inclusive of other therapeutic services that should be provided by the system, such as substance abuse disorders.

The second source of information was the research and professional practice literature. Here, we observed there was not broad consensus on whether to use the term “behavioral health”, “mental health”, or “well-being.” However, the use of the term “behavioral health” was certainly a legitimate, mainstream one that also aligned with current legislation in Iowa. Furthermore, it was typically framed as being inclusive of mental health, which aligned with the Children's Board's perspective.

¹ Adapted from [mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov)

² Adapted from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K)

Resources Used

- <http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>
- <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>
- <https://educateiowa.gov/documents/early-childhood-standards/2019/01/iowa-early-learning-standards-3rd-edition>
- <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/learner-supports/mental-health>
- <https://arraybc.com/defining-behavioral-health>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>
- <https://www.nami.org/>
- <https://www.pbis.org/topics/mental-healthsocial-emotional-well-being>
- <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=HF%20690>
- <https://www.schoolclimate.org/>
- <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/School-Climate-and-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-Integrative-Approach-January-2018.pdf>
- https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/ccbhc-criteria.pdf
- <http://nationathope.org/report-from-the-nation/>

Stakeholder Groups Providing Input

- Children's Behavioral Health System Board
- AEA Special Education Directors
- AEA Well-Being Work Group
- Iowa Department of Education Internal Learning Supports Team
- Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K) Design Team