



Wisconsin
Evaluation
Collaborative



Summer 2024

User Guide: Wisconsin Mental Health Literacy Survey for Educators (WI-MHLSE)



About the Authors

Developed in partnership with the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC), the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER), and the the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

WCER/WEC Survey Development Team

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WI DPI Mental Health Consultants

Jessica Frain is a School Mental Health Consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on the Student Services Prevention/Wellness team. She is the Project Director for Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education), and she coordinates other state and federal funding related to school mental health. Her work focuses on supporting schools and districts in implementing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems.

Liz Krubsack is a School Mental Health Consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on the Student Services Prevention/Wellness team. Her work focuses on supporting schools in implementing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems and increasing student and educator mental health literacy.

About the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) is housed at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. WEC's team of evaluators supports youth-serving organizations and initiatives through culturally responsive and rigorous program evaluation. Learn more at <http://www.wec.wceruw.org>.

About this Survey

Background and Overview of Mental Health Literacy

The Wisconsin School Mental Health Literacy Survey (WI-MHLSE) is part of a joint partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI), Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The purpose of this survey is to shape system planning by better understanding educators' mental health literacy. It is not intended to assess individuals; rather, it is intended to understand mental health literacy across schools and districts.

This is important because mental health literacy helps people live healthy lives and better support the people in their lives. In schools, mental health literacy empowers educators to promote student and staff wellbeing and reduce the need for more intensive mental health supports in the future.

According to the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTC) (2020):

Mental health literacy is defined as the knowledge and beliefs about obtaining and maintaining positive mental health, reducing stigma related to mental illness, increasing help-seeking efficacy, and understanding mental health concerns and how to address them (Jorm, 2012; Kutcher et al., 2016). Mental health literacy resources and professional development for educators may target one or more of the following interrelated components: Mental Health Knowledge, Mental Health Promotion, Providing Support [for Mental Health], and Reducing Stigma.

Survey Development Process

The development process for the WI-MHLSE included an extensive survey development approach (Ruel, Wagner III, & Gillespie, 2015), utilizing best practices including:

- A literature review of existing mental health scales/instruments to identify which validated and reliable scales to incorporate. See Table I for the list of the scales/instruments that were identified and adapted to include in the WI-MHLSE.
- A scale/instrument review process with the WCER Survey Development Team and WI DPI Mental Health Consultants.
- An expert panel review. See the list below of the expert panel review members.
- Pilot testing
- Field testing

Expert Panel Reviewers:

- Nadia Assad - Senior Project Director, University of Wisconsin Survey Center
- Kristy Brann - Assistant Professor in School Psychology and School Psychology Program Director, University of Missouri-St. Louis
- Jose Castillo - Associate Professor, School Psychology Program, University of South Florida; and Director of the Institute for School-Community Partnerships, Integrated Services, and Child Mental Health and Educational Policy
- Elizabeth Connors - Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Yale School of Medicine; and Director of Quality Improvement, National Center for School Mental Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Eliza Godfrey - Doctoral Candidate, School Psychology, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Table I: Scales/Instruments Adapted for the WI-MHLSE

FOCUS AREA	SCALE/INSTRUMENT
(1) Mental Health Knowledge	Mental Health Knowledge Questionnaire (MHKQ) (Yin, Wardenaar, Xu, Tian, & Schoevers, 2020)
(2) Mental Health Promotion (3) Providing Mental Health Supports	School Mental Health Self-Efficacy Teacher Survey (SMH-SETS) (Brann, Boone, Splett, Clemons, & Bidwell, 2021)
(4) Mental Health Beliefs/Stigma	Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS) (O'Connor, Casey, & Clough, 2014)

Who Can Take This Survey?

The intended users include educational staff, particularly school-based staff who interact with students and families. These can include teachers, support staff (social worker, school counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, etc.), and administrators.

How Can the Survey Results Be Used?

School and district teams who are supporting mental health in schools can use the data in a variety of ways, including:

- As a pre- and post-measure for mental health literacy trainings
- As part of a school or district needs assessment to understand the mental health literacy of educators in their school or district, as well as areas to support for professional development
- As part of a continuous improvement cycle with periodic (e.g., annual or semiannual) survey administrations to measure the impact of the mental health trainings and initiatives within a district or school site

Note: WI DPI promotes the use of the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System ([SHAPE System](#)) to monitor mental health supports and interventions in schools – in particular, the School Mental Health Quality Assessment (SMHQA), which has a [School Version](#) and a [District Version](#). Access to the SHAPE system and the SMHQA are free of charge. For more resources to support mental health in Wisconsin schools, visit the [DPI School Mental Health Webpage](#).

How to Administer the Survey

Format:

- It is recommended to use an online platform such as Google Forms or Survey Monkey. Follow this [link](#) to access an online preview of the survey.
- It is recommended to “require” responses in the online survey platform so that respondents answer each question.
- The survey is broken down into four Focus Areas:
 - Mental Health Knowledge
 - Mental Health Promotion
 - Providing Mental Health Supports
 - Mental Health Beliefs/Stigma
- The entire survey with all four Focus Areas included should take approximately five to ten minutes.
- While it may be helpful to include all four Focus Areas to provide a comprehensive overview of mental health literacy, each Focus Area can be given individually.
- All questions within a Focus Area should be included during any given survey administration.

When to Administer the Survey and Survey Frequency:

- For a pre- and post-measure for mental health trainings, the survey can be given before and after a specific training on mental health literacy and/or self efficacy.
- As part of a continuous improvement process, the survey can be administered annually or biannually to measure impact.

Survey Interpretation

Each of the four Focus Areas can be analyzed separately. The suggested approaches to analysis for each Focus Area are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggested Analysis for Survey Focus Areas

FOCUS AREA	SUGGESTED APPROACH TO ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS
(1) Mental Health Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the only Focus Area that has “correct” answers, which are provided in the tables for this Focus Area. • The analysis for this section would be the number correct out of the total number of items (10). • This will provide a percent correct for each respondent and an “average score,” or average percent correct, for a group of respondents (e.g., school-wide, district-wide).
(2) Mental Health Promotion (3) Providing Mental Health Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These Focus Areas have response options on a 5-point Likert scale (not at all confident, a little confident, somewhat confident, very confident, extremely confident). • Results can be analyzed according to the percent of respondents who chose each of the responses for each identified question (% not at all confident, % a little confident, % somewhat confident, % very confident, % extremely confident). • Alternatively, each response could be given a numerical value (not at all confident = 1, a little confident = 2, somewhat confident = 3, very confident = 4, extremely confident = 5), and results can be averaged across groups and interpreted.
(4) Mental Health Beliefs/Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Focus Area provides response options on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree). • Results can be analyzed according to the percent of respondents who chose each of the responses for each identified question (% strongly disagree, % disagree, % neither agree or disagree, % agree, % strongly agree).

Survey Content for the WI-MHLSE

Survey Example

Follow this [link](#) to access an online preview of the survey to use as an example.

Survey Introductory Text:

The purpose of this survey is to better understand educators' mental health literacy. Components of mental health literacy include knowledge of mental health, mental health promotion, self-efficacy to support students and families with mental health challenges, and beliefs related to individuals with mental health challenges. The survey questions were adapted from existing mental health literacy scales. The survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. All survey responses are anonymous and confidential.

Mental disorder definition - A mental disorder, also referred to as a mental illness, a mental health condition, or a psychiatric disorder, is a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning.

Mental health definition - According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mental health is a state in which an individual:

- has positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness) with few negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety),
- feels fulfillment and satisfaction with life,
- has the ability to cope with everyday life stressors (resilience),
- realizes their abilities, and
- can work productively and make contributions to their community.

(Optional) Background Question:

What is your position?

- Teacher
- Administrator
- Student services staff (social worker, school counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, etc.)
- Other school support staff (administrative support, instructional assistants, maintenance, bus drivers, food service workers, etc.)
- Other

Table 3: Mental Health Knowledge Focus Area Items

Definition: Knowledge of Overall Mental Health and Related Concerns

QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS			CORRECT ANSWER
Mental health is a part of overall health.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Everyone has mental health.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Mental health challenges do not occur in early childhood.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>False</i>
An individual's mental health stays the same throughout their lifetime.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>False</i>
Mental health challenges in students can impact learning.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Mental health challenges may arise when an individual is facing major life events.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Individuals with a biological family history of mental disorders may be at a higher risk for mental disorders.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Exposure to chronic stress and trauma does not impact mental health.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>False</i>
Components of mental health include emotional, psychological, and social well-being.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>True</i>
Physical health is not known to have an impact on one's mental health.	True	False	I Don't Know	<i>False</i>

Table 4: Mental Health Promotion Focus Area Items

Definition: Promoting Positive Mental Health in the Classroom and School-Wide

QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS				
How confident are you in your ability to promote positive mental health for students?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to create a mentally healthy classroom?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to promote the social emotional skills of students?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to engage in culturally responsive practices to promote students' mental health?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to promote positive mental health for yourself?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to promote positive mental health for other adults?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident

Table 5: Providing Mental Health Supports Focus Area Items

Definition: Identifying Students in Need of Support and Linking Them to Appropriate Services and Supporting Students with Mental Health Challenges at School

QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS				
How confident are you in your ability to recognize when a student is experiencing a mental health challenge?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to recognize when there is a student demonstrating a response to trauma?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to respond when a student is having a mental health crisis?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to respond when a student is displaying aggressive behavior?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to respond when a student is expressing suicidal thoughts?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to provide academic accommodations to students experiencing mental health challenges?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to refer a student to the appropriate school-based mental health providers?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to find information for students and families about addressing mental health challenges?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to discuss student mental health concerns with parents/guardians?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
How confident are you in your ability to access resources that can help you support students with mental health challenges?	Not At All Confident	A Little Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident

Table 6: Mental Health Beliefs/Stigma Focus Area Items

Definition: Attitudes About Mental Health and Mental Disorders

QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS				
People with a mental disorder could “snap out of it” if they wanted.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A mental disorder is a sign of weakness.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A mental disorder is not a real medical disorder.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
People with a mental disorder are dangerous.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Treatment for a mental disorder, provided by a mental health professional, can be an effective option.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Seeing a mental health professional means you are not strong enough to manage your own difficulties.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If I was struggling with a mental health challenge, I would not seek treatment.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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