



The **Minding College Minds** Postsecondary Mental Health Framework

The [Minding College Minds Postsecondary Mental Health Framework](#), developed by the [Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute](#) with support from the [Texas Success Center](#) at the Texas Association of Community Colleges, is a public health model for supporting student mental health in university and community college settings. Implementation of the framework through the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy will enable Texas community colleges to create the infrastructure necessary to scale access to mental health resources and ensure that services are culturally relevant and responsive to each student's unique needs.

Postsecondary Mental Health as a Student Success Strategy

Mental health and wellbeing are critical to student persistence and academic success in postsecondary education. Emotional stress and personal mental health reasons are the top cited reasons why students in both two- and four-year degree programs consider stopping their coursework.¹ Developing a postsecondary mental health system is a core student success strategy that requires a comprehensive, community-connected, and implementation-focused approach.

Minding College Minds is a comprehensive approach that considers the entire system of mental health services and supports in a college setting with an

overarching goal of improving mental health at a population level. This approach encompasses the continuum of care, starting with mental health promotion and extending to the supports needed following an extended mental health-related absence—and everything in between. This community-connected model emphasizes the importance of creating regionally specific, culturally responsive supports, often by partnering with service providers within the same community or geographic region as the institutions. Finally, Minding College Minds is implementation focused. It offers not only the what and why, but has guidance on how to build and institutionalize successful postsecondary mental health systems that promote student success.

Institutional Commitment at the Foundation

Like academic programs, the success of an institution's mental health programming hinges on the ongoing investment of time, sustainable funding streams, and strategic commitment to campus mental health and wellbeing. As such, institutional commitment is central to the framework because it is the foundation upon which a successful postsecondary mental health system can be built. In addition to financial resources that promote sustainability, institutions can demonstrate commitment by investing in and aligning the people, policies, processes, and practices critical to a successful postsecondary mental health strategy.

The **Minding College Minds** Postsecondary Mental Health Framework has three core components: **Universal Supports, Therapeutic Supports, and Crisis Supports.**

The Minding College Minds framework offers postsecondary leaders a strategic approach to building a mental health system that is responsive to their institution's unique context, with each component of the framework serving a strategic purpose. Universal Supports and Therapeutic Supports are geared toward awareness, prevention, identification, early intervention, and treatment. Crisis Supports ensure students experiencing a crisis have access to well-coordinated services and ongoing institutional support. Together, these three components make up a comprehensive, community-connected, and implementation-focused postsecondary framework for campus-wide mental health, wellbeing, and success.

Component 1: Universal Supports

Universal Supports are policies, programs, and interventions that promote belonging and a campus culture that supports student mental health and wellbeing.

Universal Supports benefit the campus in its entirety, with a focus on serving all students, staff, and faculty equitably. Mental health promotion, prevention, screening, and early identification of symptoms and conditions are hallmarks of this component of the framework. For many students, these supports may be enough to meet their needs, while others may require the deeper interventions offered through Therapeutic Supports or Crisis Supports.

Component 2: Therapeutic Supports

The second component of the framework, **Therapeutic Supports, describes the policies, procedures, programs, and partnerships that institutions should implement to ensure students have access to the services that meet their unique needs.** Therapeutic Supports can be offered through campus providers for short-term and mild-to-moderate needs, or through community providers for more specialized needs. While Universal Supports are intended to increase mental health awareness, promote help-seeking behaviors, and identify students who need more intensive intervention, Therapeutic Supports provide timely access to appropriate services for students identified as needing that additional level of intervention.

Component 3: Crisis Supports

The final component of the framework, **Crisis Supports, is the safety net intended for students who are experiencing a mental health crisis.** This component aims to ensure rapid response and support for students during a mental health crisis. And following the crisis, this component encompasses policies and procedures that connect students to mental health care providers internal or external to the institution for longer-term and/or re-entry support when needed.

¹Lumina Foundation. (2023, August 30). *Stressed out: The mental health crisis in higher education*. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/resource/stressed-out-and-stopping-out/>

