



Arizona Association of School Psychologists
107 S. Southgate Dr. | Chandler, AZ 85226
P: [\(602\) 992-0554](tel:6029920554) | F: [\(480\) 893-7775](tel:4808937775)
www.aasp-az.org

Arizona Association of School Psychologists (AASP)

Key Policy Priorities 2021

Advance the Comprehensive Role of School Psychologists. School psychologists are specially trained to support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They provide mental health services in the learning context, including mental health screening and assessment, behavioral supports, learning supports, counseling, referrals, suicide risk assessment, and threat assessments. School psychologists are also skilled in data collection and analysis and can design and implement evidence-based interventions. School psychologists provide critical consultation, professional development, and other support to families, teachers, and administrators to help them best meet students' needs at home and at school. School psychologists help support efforts to improve teacher wellness, prevent stress, and reduce attrition.

Increase Access to Mental Health Services in Schools. One-third of Arizona students experience two or more adverse childhood experiences, and one in every five Arizona students is bullied. In 2017, an estimated 10,000 Arizona teens attempted suicide and nearly half of all child and teen deaths by gun are suicides.¹ Schools play a critical role in addressing the mental health needs of children and youth. Comprehensive mental health services in schools improve student well-being and learning. Policies should be adopted to provide adequate access to school psychologists and other school-employed mental health professionals; implement universal screening for all students, coupled with a continuum of interventions; offer professional development for school staff, parents, and community members; create evidence-based threat assessment and suicide risk protocols and teams; limit inappropriate access to firearms; and encourage collaborative partnerships with community providers.

Promote Equity for All Students. All students should be able to attend schools that are safe, supportive, and free of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence. Educational disparities contribute to large-scale achievement gaps. We oppose policies and practices that discriminate against or segregate children based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, ethnicity, color, religion, ancestry, age, national origin, immigration status, socioeconomic status, language, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, cognitive capabilities, social-emotional skills, developmental level, chronic illness, or any other personal identity or distinguishing characteristic.



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Support Effective School Safety Measures. Successful school safety requires an approach that balances physical and psychological safety. Efforts to prevent violence must align with efforts to improve school climate, overall safety, and learning. School safety initiatives should include positive climates that facilitate trusting relationships among students and staff, trained multidisciplinary school safety and crisis teams, positive discipline practices, access to services from school-employed mental health professionals, and strong school/community partnerships. In addition, we support policies that keep guns away from those who would hurt themselves or others, limit access to weapons intended to cause mass destruction in a short amount of time, and ensure that the only armed persons at schools are highly trained professionals, such as school resource officers.

Improve Access to School Psychologists. The recommended ratio of students to school psychologists is 500:1.ⁱⁱ In Arizona, the current ratio is 1,300:1.ⁱⁱⁱ Policymakers should increase efforts to recruit and retain school psychologists, expand university-district partnerships, and increase graduate education opportunities. The shortage of school psychologists limits their availability to engage in valuable work for the benefit of all students. Shortages result in unmanageable caseloads, a narrow role limited only to special education compliance efforts, and an inability to provide preventive services and consultation with teachers.

Increase Investments in Education. A student's zip code should not dictate the quality of their education. Investments that target funding and support for our most vulnerable students in high-poverty schools are critical. We support increased investments to support our most vulnerable students, increased investments for students with disabilities, increased investments in professional development programs, and increased investments in well-rounded curricula and access to comprehensive learning supports.

For questions or more information regarding the Arizona Association of School Psychologists, please contact Jamie Timmerman, President, AASP at (602)301-7707; or Susie Cannata, Peters, Cannata & Moody, PLC. at (602)248-2900.

ⁱ <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/everystat>

ⁱⁱ National Association of School Psychologists Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services

ⁱⁱⁱ Arizona Association of School Psychologists Intervention Newsletter