



# South Carolina leads the way in developing a school mental health system

By Dr. Jessica Edwards

In 2018, a shooting incident at a high school in Florida led the Governor of South Carolina and key leaders in education and mental health services to collaborate on ensuring safety in schools. One agreed target was to have a mental health expert working in every school in the state by 2022. Now, researchers in South Carolina have provided an update to Child and Adolescent Mental Health on the efforts underway to expand school mental health services in the state.

Cheri Shapiro *et al.* outline the premise of five key initiatives ongoing in South Carolina: (1) the Pee Dee Resiliency Project, (2) the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Evidence-Based Intervention, (3) the Upstate Child Protection Training Center, (4) the Engaging and Training with Compassion Project, and (5) the Behavioural Alliance of South Carolina. All five initiatives involve collaborations with diverse groups of stake-holders, researchers and leaders in mental

health. Despite their different angles and approach, the common aim of these projects is to produce a leading school mental health system.

Shapiro and colleagues hope that these initiatives in South Carolina might be replicated and extended to other regions. As demonstrated in South Carolina, schools can work effectively with academic and community partners to build a mental health workforce that serves children, young people and families.

## Referring to:

Shapiro, C.J., Collins, C., Parker, J., Martinez, S., Olson, S. & Weist, M.D. (2020), *Coalescing investments in school mental health in South Carolina. Child Adolesc. Ment. Health*. doi: 10.1111/camh.12382.