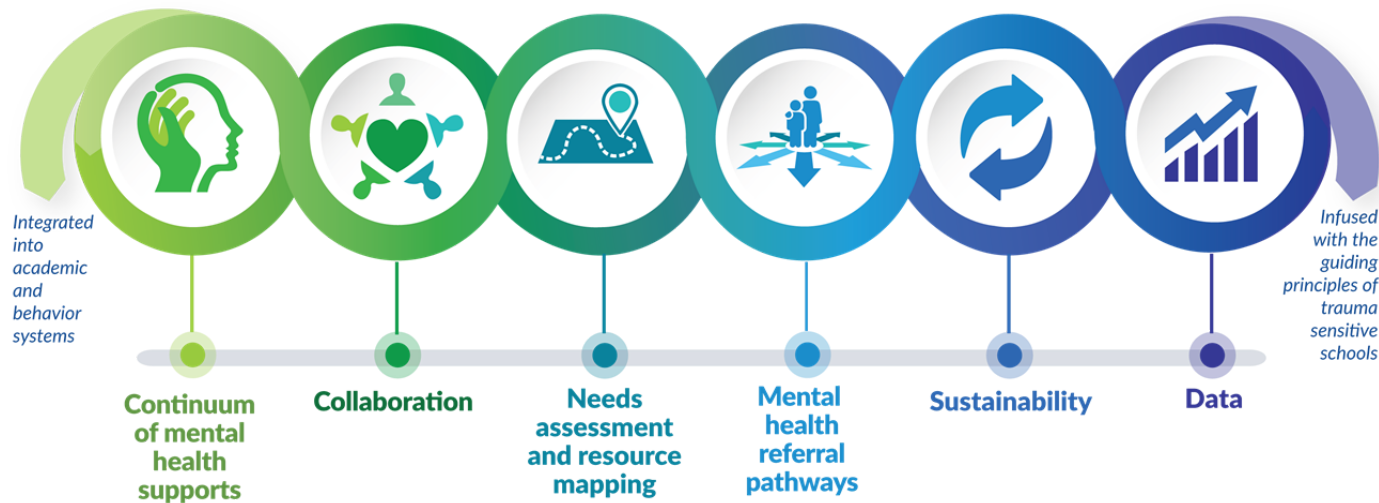


# Root Cause Analysis in Comprehensive School Mental Health: Fishbone Tool

**Purpose:** The Fishbone Tool helps teams to engage in root cause analysis through visual exploration of the relationship between a problem and its potential causes. By better understanding the underlying factors contributing to a problem and organizing them in a meaningful way, teams can generate useful solutions to a problem.

**Framing:** While the Fishbone Tool exists in many forms, this tool was created to help teams identify the aspects of their Comprehensive School Mental Health System (CSMHS) that may not be functioning as intended. The tool utilizes each component of the CSMHS as a potential factor contributing to the problem. This approach anchors teams in their commitment to fixing systems, not students, by focusing on changes to adult practices, programs, policies, and procedures that may act as barriers to student well-being.



# Facilitation Directions:

- 1 Begin by identifying the problem statement and recording it in the fish head. The problem statement should focus on a student outcome that needs to be improved.
- 2 Locate the CSMH component listed at the end of each fish rib. These are the system factors that may be affecting the identified problem. Teams wishing to familiarize themselves with each component can refer to the [Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework](#).
- 3 Brainstorm a list of hypotheses about the root cause of the problem. As a group, check all the hypotheses for clarity and detail, and ensure that they represent practices that are in the school's control. Next, condense any hypotheses that the group agrees are similar. Finally, record the list on the fishbone ribs. Note that some causes may fit under more than one component. Use the following questions to guide this discussion:

- What are the potential root causes of a student outcome problem?
- Do the root causes listed represent practices that are in our control?
- Whose voices have not been heard related to the potential root causes?
- What patterns in our hypotheses do we observe among the CSMHS components?
- Which features of the CSMHS components represent the greatest source of possible root causes?

\*Adapted from [WISELearn](#)

## Facilitation Tip!

Recreate the fishbone diagram on a whiteboard or large piece of chart paper. Write hypotheses on sticky notes so that they can be easily moved around the diagram.



# Example Fishbone Diagram

