School Mental Health Quality Assessment (SMHQA)
FAQs

How can my school or district access the SMHQA?

Before you can complete the SMHQA, you need to create a school or district (or both, depending on what you are interested in assessing) account. Once you have created that account, individuals who will be completing the assessment can create individual accounts and request access, or the owner of the school or district team can invite others to join the team. For tutorials on how to create a SHAPE account, check out the videos under the "How to use SHAPE" tab.

How should we go about completing this assessment?

Some teams opt to schedule some time to complete the assessment together and have one person enter their scores into the system. Other teams ask raters to complete the assessment individually and enter their own scores. In this case, the SHAPE system aggregates the scores to create one report for the school or district.

How do we determine if we should give a score of "sometimes" or "always"?

The assessment represents best practices in each domain. Raters should keep in mind that best practices are a general guide to high quality in that indicator. A team does not have to implement ALL best practices to rate themselves as "always," but it is not sufficient to only implement one best practice with high frequency to rate as "always". In general, an "always" suggests that a team is implementing many best practices of an indicator with high frequency. "Sometimes" indicates that the team is implementing some of the best practices "sometimes," which could be inconsistently or only in some settings.

What should we do after we complete the assessment?

Teams can generate reports from various time frames and raters. For example, a report could represent a point in time or an aggregate of all scores taken to date. Once the team has run the report of interest, they can utilize the Strategic Planning Guide at the end of the report to prioritize a domain of focus. From there, they can consult the corresponding quality guide to start planning for changes in that domain. Teams can utilize Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles to test small changes to the system and monitor the impact.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction
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Who should complete the SMHQA?

Schools and districts planning to complete the assessment should start by gathering a team of stakeholders to provide input on assessment questions. This team should be multidisciplinary, including stakeholders such as school staff, community partners, and caregivers, and represent the perspectives of historically marginalized groups in the school-community.

What if our assessment results show that our system is emerging and progressing in most domains?

If you are seeing a lot of red and yellow on your SMHQA report, do not be discouraged! It is not uncommon for teams to start out with low scores. Use your results to prioritize and plan key improvement areas. This is a quality improvement tool to facilitate structured conversations, drive strategic planning, provide a metric for reassessment, and optimize all aspects of your school mental health system over time.

How much time should does it take to complete the SMHQA?

Teams should expect to spend no more than 2-3 hours completing the assessment. Avoid getting stalled on one question by setting a time limit for each. Remember, the assessment is meant to provide a snapshot of the system as a whole, and extensive discussion about individual questions can be a barrier to completion. The assessment does not have to be completed all at once; teams rate all domains separately.

Is completing the SMHQA worth the time and effort?

Absolutely! Teams at any point in their journey of improving school mental health systems benefit from completing the assessment. Not only does it help teams find entry points into the work, it also provides an opportunity to build commitment in the school-community and engage more stakeholders in the planning process. This assessment also provides an opportunity to highlight the great progress you've already made, and can be a powerful tool to advocate for more mental health resources.