

# 2026-27 Project AWARE Networked Improvement Community



## Elevate Organizational Well-Being and Resilience with DPI's Statewide Initiative

Be a part of the second groundbreaking statewide initiative that's setting the standard for **comprehensive school mental health**. Join a dynamic movement focused on fostering **organizational well-being and resilience** through innovative and collaborative work. Connect with your colleagues across the state and apply cutting-edge **improvement science** to make a real impact in your district. Showcase your commitment to organizational well-being with this unique opportunity to learn, grow, and lead together.

## Snapshot of Improvements from the 2024-2026 NIC



## Your Hosts

The Department of Public Instruction was awarded Project AWARE in 2023, a five-year federal grant through the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), designed to Advance Wellness and Resilience in Education.

- The Project aims to strengthen public schools in enhancing their Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems (CSMHS), with the overarching goal of advancing health and educational equity throughout Wisconsin as supported by all 12 CESAs, DPI, and regional and national partners.
- Project AWARE provides the state with the funds and structure to offer a unified approach to delivering high-quality technical assistance for CSMH by offering participating school districts the chance to deepen their understanding and expand their skills through a Networked Improvement Community (NIC).

# 2026-27 Project AWARE

## Networked Improvement Community

### What is a Networked Improvement Community (NIC)?

A NIC is a shared learning community where educators and partners collaborate using principles of improvement science to tackle a specific problem, test solutions, share data, and rapidly learn to improve outcomes at scale. One experienced school mental health team per CESA region will engage in this shared learning process.

- Our action-oriented approach applies evidence-based improvement science tools and strategies (such as root cause analysis and small, rapid tests of change employing monthly Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles) using district data to continuously refine practices.
- The NIC utilizes [DPI's Roadmap for School Mental Health Improvement](#) to positively impact a common, statewide challenge.
- Efforts will be supported by CESA CSMH Coaches, CSMH Statewide Coordinator, DPI School Mental Health Consultants, state and national content experts, and local resources.

### Organizational Well-Being: Focus and Aim

The 2026-2027 NIC will prioritize improving organizational well-being through a systems-based approach.

#### *Organizational Well-Being Defined*

“An organization’s ability to promote and maintain employee’s physical, psychological, and social well-being at all levels and for every job” (National Institute for Health, 2010).

#### *NIC Focus*

The focus is on improving organizational well-being to increase educator retention, reduce burnout, improve professional quality of life, and build lasting and meaningful connections to the work educators engage in on a daily basis.

#### *Shared Problem of Practice*

Wisconsin is experiencing high levels of staff turnover, staff shortages, and increased student mental health challenges, all resulting in staff burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and lowered student achievement.

#### *Shared Aim*

By May 2027, Organizational well-being of NIC districts will improve by at least one point in two domains of organizational well-being as measured by the Organizational Well-Being Inventory for Schools (OWBI-S) in the [SHAPE platform](#).

# 2026-27 Project AWARE

## Networked Improvement Community

### Eligibility

Each CESA will support one school district team in their region-free of charge-to engage in the NIC for the 2026-2027 school year (*see schedule below*).

- Eligible teams will have an *intermediate to advanced level* of experience with systems change work, and a *recommended* understanding of and/or prior use with improvement science (i.e., Rapid Cycle PDSAs) preferably related to school mental health.

### School District Team Composition

Each participating district will include a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8 team members:

Required:

- Director of pupil services/special education/student services or Other District Administrator (i.e., Human Resources Director)
- Pupil services staff

Recommended:

- Building administrator
- Teacher(s), including special education & health educators
- Other district-level leaders (i.e., District Nurse)
- Community mental health partners
- Student/caregivers (where appropriate)

### NIC Expectations

School district teams will be expected to:

- Identify a team member to lead or co-lead the NIC work
- Participate in a virtual orientation
- Complete the Organizational Well-being Inventory ([OWBI-S](#)) in the [SHAPE system](#)
- Participate in scheduled in-person learning days (1 in-person kick off and 1 in-person celebration)
- Participate in monthly 60 minute virtual action calls (shared learning and idea exchange)
- Report on the impact of participation and share experience, progress, and outcomes based on organizational wellness work
- Complete and submit at least 1 small test of change (via a PDSA planning form) per month completed at the site level and collect associated data

### Cost and Registration

Cost: **FREE**

**Registration: To be Completed by CESA Lead(s):** Select your participating team based on school district interest and components from the NIC Team Readiness Checklist. Upon identifying the NIC team for your CESA, complete this [Registration Form](#).

*\*District teams will be required to cover travel (i.e., hotel, mileage, food) expenses for the in-person learning days.*

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## Questions and Contacts

Questions about Project AWARE and the 2026-27 NIC: Please contact:

- Comprehensive School Mental Health Statewide Coordinator: Dr. Jen Rohrbaugh, [jrohrbaugh@cesa1.k12.wi.us](mailto:jrohrbaugh@cesa1.k12.wi.us), (262) 787-9500, ext. 9569
- DPI Project AWARE Director: Jess Frain, [jessica.frain@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:jessica.frain@dpi.wi.gov), (608) 266-0986
- DPI School Mental Health Consultant: Liz Krubsack, [liz.krubsack@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:liz.krubsack@dpi.wi.gov), (608) 264-6719
- [Project AWARE and NIC Flier](#)

## Timeline of Activities

2026-2027 NIC Schedule		
August 2026	60 mins	Orientation–Asynchronous Virtual Recording
September 15, 2026	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action Call</a>
October 13, 2026	9:00 - 3:00 pm	In-Person Kick Off*
November 17, 2026	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
December 15, 2026	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
January 19, 2027	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
February 16, 2027	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
March 16, 2027	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
April 20, 2027	1:00-2:00 pm	<a href="#">Virtual Action call</a>
May 18, 2027	9:00 - 3:00 pm	In-Person Celebration*

\*Learning sessions will focus on specific quality improvement methods and best practices.

\*\*Action calls will focus on reviewing PDSA data submitted within and across teams. Teams will discuss activities related to improvement science processes and organizational wellbeing.