



## School Climate Support For DC Public & Public Charter Schools

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Dear Colleague,

Your school is invited to participate in an innovative three-year National Institute for Justice (NIJ) study that offers, **free of charge**, on-going support and guidance to improve school climate and promote positive development among DC's seventh and eighth grade students via Safe School Certification (SCC).

SCC is a framework, not a prescribed curriculum. It is designed to work with the programs and practices that already exist in your school. SSC staff will work alongside you and your team to develop the foundation on which those programs can be implemented with fidelity and effectively achieve their goals. SCC recognizes that no two schools' needs are exactly the same, which is why our process aims to:

- Recognize the important, positive steps your school has already taken to improve school climate and reduce violence
- Provide expert support and data, to build upon and sustain these efforts
- Promote positive student academic, social, and behavioral outcome.

**Every school that participates in this process will receive some level of support**, as detailed below.

Researchers from Child Trends, a local non-profit research organization, will be working with us to evaluate the impact of providing this support by conducting observations, interviews and focus groups with participating school teams and by analyzing school climate data collected through the Department of Education's School Climate Survey (ED-SCLS) platform and facilitate and compiled by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). OSSE will work closely with each school to ensure successful administration of these surveys. Given the need to conduct a rigorous evaluation, each school that volunteers to participate will receive one of two levels of support, described below; schools will be randomly assigned to these levels.

### **All schools that participate will receive:**

- Tailored school climate data reports, identifying areas of success and areas for additional focus
- Guidance around eight key elements of school climate capacity
- Opportunity to demonstrate progress and be recognized for developing these key elements
- Potential to apply for supplemental funding of up to \$15,000 per selected school after completion of year 1 and year 2 checkpoints.

### **Schools randomly selected to receive enhanced support will additionally receive:**

- Ongoing, individualized guidance and project management from expert technical assistance specialists who will work closely with each school to complete each key element
- Regular training events through webinars and conference calls
- Opportunities to interact with other participating schools through virtual and in-person community of practice meetings

The enclosure provides additional information regarding SSC, as well as the benefits and requirements for participation. We hope to identify all participating schools by July 15. Notification of whether schools will receive basic or enhanced supports will be provided by August 8. We look forward to providing you additional information.

Sincerely,  
Ryan Roemeran  
Project Director, Safe School Certification



## The Opportunity

District of Columbia Public Schools and Public Charter Schools serving grades 7 and 8 are eligible to receive support provided by Safe School Certification, **free of charge**, to strengthen capacity to reduce school violence, improve school climate, and maximize valuable resources. With funding from the National Institute for Justice, Safe School Certification, supported by the DC Office of Human Rights and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, will provide support and guidance to participating schools. By improving the selection and fit of prevention programming, SCC can help schools implement programs with fidelity and better utilize time and funding on areas of identified need.

### Goals:

- Improve selection and fit of prevention programming in schools, saving valuable resources.
- Build capacity to understand data, respond to what is actually going on, and better support students.
- Sustain efforts by providing high-quality technical assistance centered on intentional planning.
- Achieve recognition and serve as an example for other schools to follow.

Safe School Certification is not a prescribed curriculum or program. Instead, the framework helps coordinate efforts already occurring in your school, identify those that are working, streamline those that are not, and bring in new, evidence-based trainings, practices and programs to target areas of need identified by data. Schools which complete this process are rewarded with public recognition of their work.

**Every school that participates in this process will receive some level of support**, as detailed below. Researchers from Child Trends, a local non-profit research organization, will be working with us to evaluate the impact of providing this support, using the school climate data collected by OSSE and by conducting observations, interviews and focus groups with participating school teams. As such, schools who volunteer to participate will receive one of two levels of support, described below; schools will be randomly assigned to these levels.

### All schools that participate will receive:

- Tailored school climate data reports, identifying areas of success and areas for additional focus
- Guidance around eight key elements of school climate capacity
- Opportunity to demonstrate progress and be recognized for developing these key elements
- Potential to apply for supplemental funding of up to \$15,000 after completion of year 1 and year 2

### Schools randomly selected to receive **enhanced services** will additionally receive:

- Ongoing, individualized guidance and project management from expert technical assistance specialists (*see attached job description*) who will:
  - Conduct a *Current Climate Capacity Assessment* a rubric that helps SSC **understand current efforts** as they relate to the desired states of each element; allowing us to measure your school's progress in a clear way
  - Train leadership team members to **synthesize and interpret data** from the *Current Climate Capacity Assessment* and Student, Staff, and Family School Climate Surveys.
  - Providing 8 **training modules** to school leadership teams on each of the 8 elements.



- o Provide technical assistance to schools via **biweekly on-site and/or phone consultations** to identify existing and new strategies that fit, are feasible, and are effective for the school's individual community.
- o **Provide tools** to leadership teams to deepen their capacity and measure progress toward meeting the desired states of each element in a straight-forward, transparent way.
- Regular training events through webinars and conference calls that focus on each of the eight elements to support each school's leadership teams
- Opportunities to interact with other participating schools through virtual and in-person community of practice meetings

### The Eight Elements of Safe School Certification:

*These eight, evidence informed practices, build the capacity of schools to improve their climate*

<b>Policy and Enforcement</b>	Rules for behavior are established, agreed upon by the school's community and enforced consistently.
<b>Leadership</b>	Efforts are guided by teams representing the entire school community.
<b>Data</b>	Data-collection and evaluation drive decision making.
<b>Buy-In</b>	Support and input is solicited from all members of the school's community.
<b>Student Engagement</b>	Students are actively encouraged to take a leadership role in shaping their school climates.
<b>Family and Community Engagement</b>	The vital role of families and communities is recognized, and they are integrated into schools' efforts.
<b>Training</b>	All staff, including school support staff, are trained.
<b>Programs and Practices</b>	Evidence-informed prevention and intervention programming focused on areas of identified need.

### Participation Requirements

Schools interested in receiving support from Safe School Certification must commit to the following:

- Annual administration of anonymous, student, parent, and staff school climate surveys collected through an online system by Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) each fall. OSSE will work with participating schools to administer the survey and to compile data following each collection. Participating schools will receive a detailed data report within two months of completion of the surveys.
- Willingness to allow Child Trends, the project evaluator, to conduct research activities relevant to the project including observations and interviews or focus groups with school climate teams.



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- Work with Safe School Certification to engage in tailored planning, training, and technical assistance activities related to the project.

### Program Costs

Although all supports provided by SSC will be provided free of charge, participating schools will need to dedicate devoted staff time for smart school climate planning through a school leadership team. This can be easily incorporated into existing committees (i.e. School Wellness Committee or other committees that address school culture and climate). Each school receiving **enhanced supports** will need to budget approximately 2 hours per week for at least one school leadership team member to work with a technical assistance specialist.

Meetings will either be by phone or in person (our specialists are DC-based, and will travel to schools for in-person meetings). As schools start to streamline prevention efforts, team member(s) may want to devote more time in order to meet the desired states of one or more of the elements (for example, if data show that family and community engagement needs improvement, the school's leadership team might devise a way to improve that element by having a family and community night at the school, which would require some additional team member hours).

### The Process

*SSC is a three-year technical assistance model that has three key milestones:*

Milestone	Details
<b>Year 1: Checkpoint 1</b>	Your school has met the desired states of the first three elements—Leadership, Data, and Buy-In.
<b>Year 2: Checkpoint 2</b>	Your school has met the desired states of the final five elements—Policy and Enforcement, Student Engagement, Family and Community Engagement, Training, and Programs and Practices.
<b>Year 3: Certification</b>	Your school has created a portfolio of its work documenting progress towards meeting the desired states on all eight elements and your school is publically recognized for establishing the foundation for a positive school climate.

At the end of years 1 and 2, a highly-trained external certification team called the Certification Advisory Board (CAB), which includes the Mayor's Youth Bullying Prevention Task Force, and local community representatives and experts in school climate, will receive a portfolio of materials that demonstrate how your school has completed each of the elements within the checkpoint.



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After assessing those materials, the team provides feedback on whether your school’s efforts are sufficient to pass each checkpoint. If they are, your school is eligible to apply for funding of up to \$15,000 to support next steps. In year 3, after successfully addressing each of the eight elements, and submitting a final portfolio, your school will be rewarded with public certification.

The timeline below is provided as a general framework. If selected for enhanced support, SSC Technical Assistance Specialists will help create a timeline that best fits your needs and work with your school’s leadership team during every process step.

### Year 1

Estimated Completion Time	Process Step
<b>1-2 month</b>	Onboarding & Buy-In <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview Presentation and Buy-In Survey</li> <li>• Leadership Team trained on SCC framework</li> <li>• Leadership Team receives tools to support its work</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Data Collection and Data Based Decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Climate Capacity Assessment</li> <li>• EDSCLS – Education Department’s School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Leadership Team members are trained on how to use data</li> </ul>
<b>3-4 months</b>	Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership team prepares for Checkpoint 1</li> <li>• Workbook #1 complete and all pertinent artifacts</li> <li>• Implementation Plan created for final five elements</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Certification and Advisory Board Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification Board reviews Checkpoint 1 materials</li> <li>• Certification Board provides feedback to schools</li> <li>• Revisions completed</li> <li>• Schools passing Checkpoint 1 invited to apply for funding</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Schools notified if grant applications are funded



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**Year 2**

Estimated Completion Time	Process Step
<b>4-5 months</b>	Climate Assessment and Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDSCLS – Education Department’s School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Leadership team prepares for Checkpoint 1               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Workbook #1 complete and all pertinent artifacts</li> </ul> </li> </ul> Implementation Plan created for final five elements
<b>3-4 months</b>	Certification and Advisory Board Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification Board reviews Checkpoint 2 materials</li> <li>• Certification Board provides feedback to schools</li> <li>• Revisions completed</li> <li>• Schools passing Checkpoint 2 invited to apply for funding</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Schools notified if grant applications are funded

**Year 3**

Estimated Completion Time	Process Step
<b>4-6 months</b>	Climate Assessment and Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDSCLS – Education Department’s School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Leadership team completes final portfolio with all artifacts</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Certification and Advisory Board Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification Board reviews final portfolio</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 months</b>	Schools successfully completing all elements receive recognition

**For More Information:**

We appreciate you taking the time to learn more about this opportunity. We hope to identify all participating schools by July 15. Information about whether schools will receive basic or enhanced supports will be provided by August 8. If you are interested in being involved or would like more information, please contact:

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