



# MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Focus:PHI

The Center of Excellence for Protected Health Information

## FEDERAL HEALTH PRIVACY LAWS: BASICS FOR SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS LEARNING SERIES SUMMARY

To assist mental health professionals working in schools in understanding how the federal health privacy laws apply to student mental health information, the MHTTC Network and the Center of Excellence for Protected Health Information (CoE-PHI) hosted a virtual learning series, *Federal Health Privacy Laws: Basics for School Professionals*. This report summarizes the evaluation of the 2-part training series provided on March 14 & 16, 2023 and attended by a total of 2,105 school-based health and mental health professionals.

There are multiple federal health privacy laws that may apply to student mental health information. Through our 2-part training series, we aimed to:

- Describe how federal health privacy laws (e.g., HIPAA and FERPA) apply to student mental health information
- Explain how student mental health information can be protected and shared in compliance with federal health privacy laws
- Discuss common scenarios involving student mental health information that arise in school settings through case study discussions led by clinical and legal experts
- Demonstrate how relevant resources and technical assistance can be accessed through the MHTTC Network and the CoE-PHI

**Session 1** focused on the importance of protecting and sharing student mental health information. Subject matter experts also provided an overview of the federal health privacy laws that apply to student mental health information.

**Session 2** built upon the learnings from Session 1 by reviewing common scenarios in school settings that involve student mental health information. Subject matter experts led a discussion about clinical and legal considerations for each scenario.

Materials from the learning series, including recordings of the sessions, slide decks, speaker information and additional relevant resources are available [here](#).



## OVERALL EVALUATION FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

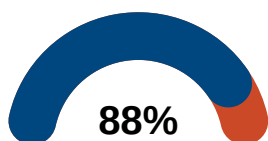
**91%**

INDICATED SATISFACTION WITH THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE TRAINING PROVIDED



**96%**

INDICATED THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THIS TRAINING TO A COLLEAGUE



**88%**

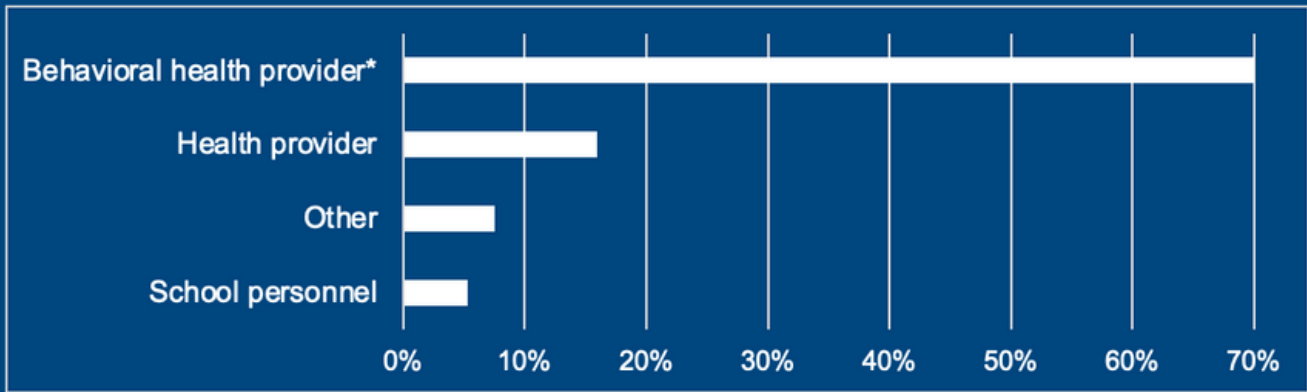
INDICATED THEY EXPECT THIS TRAINING WILL IMPROVE THEIR ABILITY TO WORK EFFECTIVELY



**93%**

INDICATED THEY EXPECT THIS TRAINING TO BENEFIT THEM AND/OR THEIR COMMUNITY

## ATTENDEE PROFESSION



\*Including those who work in schools

## SELECTED FEEDBACK AND REFLECTIONS

"It was very helpful to get condensed, common-language explanations for HIPAA and FERPA laws/regulations. The law is confusing and made more difficult with state specific differences! Just having open discussion about FERPA and HIPAA and having someone utilizing plain language to explain things was helpful."

"I found most useful the examples provided for HIPAA/FERPA regulations that an independent contractor at a school may be held to and how they are different than the confidentiality obligations of a school employee. It is confusing without the examples."

"This event gave me a more solid base of knowledge with which I am now able to ask more specific questions and locate resources to give more clear guidance on this topic. The information provided can be shared with the project I am working on and also benefit the LEAs I work with."

"I am familiar with HIPAA but not with FERPA and the Part 2 Privacy Act. Learning the differences between them all has been extremely helpful to me. Lots of great information, and it was nice to have the most important info from these cumbersome laws pulled out and compared together."

"Wow, so much information! Helps to know the differences between the privacy acts, how students are protected, and the differences for therapists employed by a school and those paid by the district with Medicaid funding. The differentiation is complex. This helped."

"I appreciated the information received regarding the in-depth learnings of FERPA and HIPAA for those working in the secondary school setting. I believe that I will use almost everything in one manner or another. Very useful information."

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAINING AND RESOURCES

"Additional training, resources and guidance on state-specific laws and regulations under HIPAA and FERPA would be helpful. More information on a state-by-state basis will also allow for the interface between federal and state laws to be addressed."

"It would be ideal to have separate trainings that distinguish HIPAA and FERPA regulations for those working in a school through a community agency versus those who are working at a school and are employed by the school."

"I would find it beneficial to focus on regulations for sharing student health information with other professionals as opposed to sharing with guardians. Training/resources that address student health information that gets brought into the IEP process would also be helpful."

Access additional MHTTC school mental health-related training and resources [here](#).

Questions? Please contact the MHTTC Network Coordinating Office at [networkoffice@mhttcnetwork.org](mailto:networkoffice@mhttcnetwork.org).



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