



# School Funding Interim Commission

69th Montana Legislature

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## PANEL DISCUSSION

### Student Mental Health and Behavior

Wednesday February 11, 2026  
Room 317, State Capitol

Introductory overview of the Mental Health landscape in Montana:

- Sarah Music OPI Student Safety and Wellness Committee
- Dr. Rob Watson Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana (SAM)

Panelists:

- Dr. Laurie Barron Superintendent, Evergreen School District (Kalispell)
- Lona Carter Student Health Services Director, Helena School District
- Rae Cooper Principal, Lowell Elementary School (Missoula)
- Kelsey Gummer Montana Healthcare Foundation (MTHF)

Discussion Prompts:

- Help the SFIC understand the current state of Student Mental Health across Montana.
  - How do rural schools vs urban schools compare? Are caseloads increasing? Are mental health / behavior issues distracting from classroom instruction?
- What are the tools in your toolbox? Talk about what your school/district is doing, what works, what are the challenges?

Terminology:

- BTA = Behavioral Threat Assessment
- CSCT = Comprehensive School and Community Treatment
- FERPA = Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- FQHC = Federally Qualified Health Center
- HIPAA = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
- MTSS = Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- PAX, QPR, Second Step, SOS, YAMH = Examples of curriculum / training programs to identify and support students' mental health, behaviors, mindset, and interpersonal skills
- RBHI = Rural Behavioral Health Institute
- SBHC = School Based Health Center
- SBOT = School Based Outpatient Therapy
- SRA = Suicide Risk Assessment