



USI Social Work Conference 2025  
School Social Work  
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## Key Strategy

**Grow and sustain an easily accessible, equitable, accountable, and impactful system of care for kids across school systems, communities, counties, and regions.**

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# 5 Pillar Model

- ✓ **Highly Skilled & Supervised Staff**  
(Primarily Master’s level Social Workers embedded in schools)
- ✓ **Comprehensive Menu of Proven Programs**
- ✓ **Continuous Evaluation & Improvement**
- ✓ **Strong Partnerships**  
(Schools, Other Agencies, Churches, Funders, etc.)
- ✓ **Passionate Volunteers & Supporters**

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## Youth First’s Student Assistance Team

[youthfirstinc.org](http://youthfirstinc.org)

812-421-8336



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## Learning Objectives for the day

- ▶ What we see in a typical school day
- ▶ Unique Opportunities in School-Based Care
- ▶ How students can be supported in a school environment
- ▶ Multi-Tiered System of Support and Example of Programs
- ▶ Challenges and Benefits to being a School Social Worker
- ▶ What else?

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## School Social Work, Detective Work?




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## What we see in a school day...

- ▶ Common Mental Health Concerns
  - ▶ Anxiety
  - ▶ Depression
  - ▶ ADHD
  - ▶ Trauma-Related Disorders
- ▶ Common Factors Affecting Mental Health
  - ▶ Family Environment
  - ▶ Socioeconomic Status and Access to Resources
- ▶ Behaviors or Non-Performance
  - ▶ Academic Struggles/Pressure
  - ▶ Behavioral and Emotional Dysregulation
  - ▶ Peer Relationships

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## A Special Note on Trauma



### Adverse Childhood Experiences

<b>52%</b> Economically Disadvantaged	<b>22%</b> History of Family Mental Illness
<b>44%</b> Parents Divorced or Never Married	<b>17%</b> History of Family Domestic Violence
<b>31%</b> History of Family Substance Abuse	<b>7%</b> Currently Incarcerated Parent
<b>27%</b> History of Abuse and/or Neglect	<b>3%</b> Lost a Loved One to Overdose

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## School-Based Care: A Unique Opportunity

- ▶ Access
- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Connections
- ▶ Relationship



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## How Do We Improve Students' Lives

### ▶ Risk Factors

- ▶ Poverty: Low Socioeconomic Status
- ▶ Family History of Mental Health or Substance Abuse
- ▶ Differently Abled: Learning and Processing
- ▶ Family issues: Abuse, Neglect, or Disengaged Parents
- ▶ Temperament of the Child

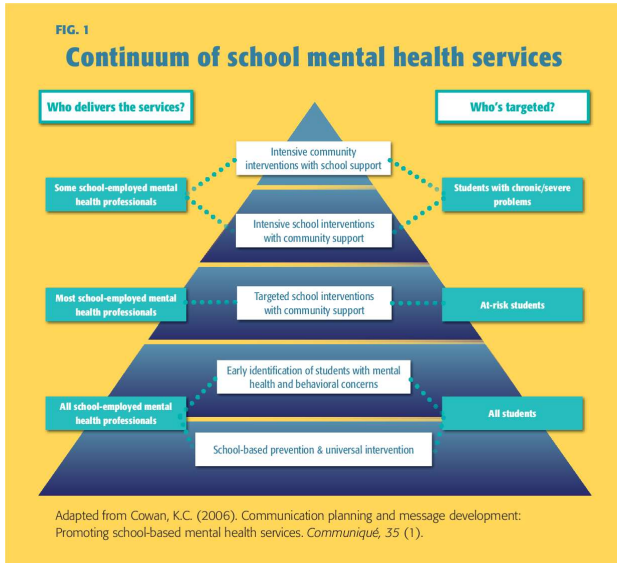
### ▶ Protective Factors

- ▶ Caring relationships and Social Connections: Teachers and other adults who create a safe, positive environment
- ▶ Social Skills, Decision Making and Problem Solving
- ▶ Positive Attitudes and Beliefs: Optimism, hope, self-efficacy and resilience
- ▶ Proper Mental Health and Medical Care



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# Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



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## AI's Pals & LifeSkills Training *for classrooms*

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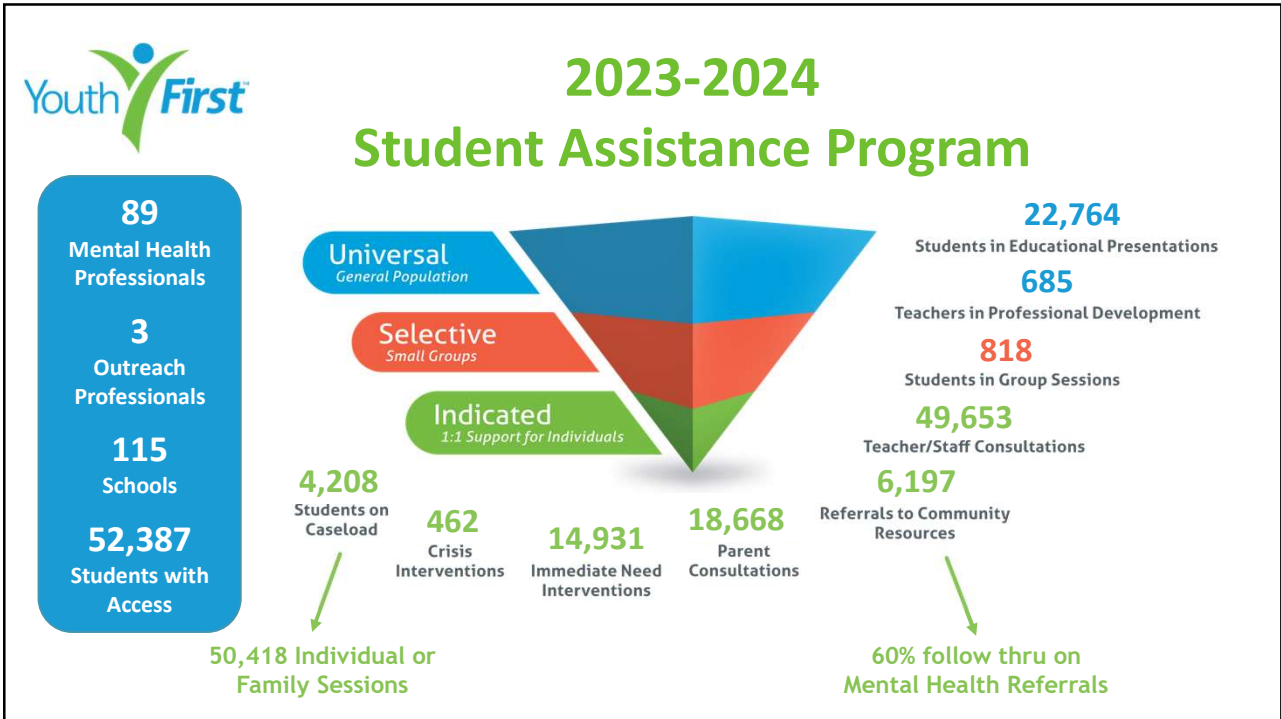


Youth **First**

## Reconnecting Youth Program

*for high school students*

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## Challenges in School Social Work

- ▶ Fast-Paced Work Environment
- ▶ High Student Need
- ▶ Not as Clinically Focused
- ▶ Diverse and Complex Student Needs
- ▶ Collaboration Barriers with Parents
- ▶ Collaboration Barriers with School Staff
- ▶ Managing Confidentiality

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## Benefits of School Social Work

- ▶ The Opportunity to Make Real and Significant Impact
- ▶ Building Deep and Meaningful Relationships
- ▶ Variety in Daily Work
- ▶ The Opportunity to Promote Social Justice
- ▶ Consistent Work Schedule
- ▶ Job Stability and Growth Opportunities
- ▶ No Billing and Summers Off!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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