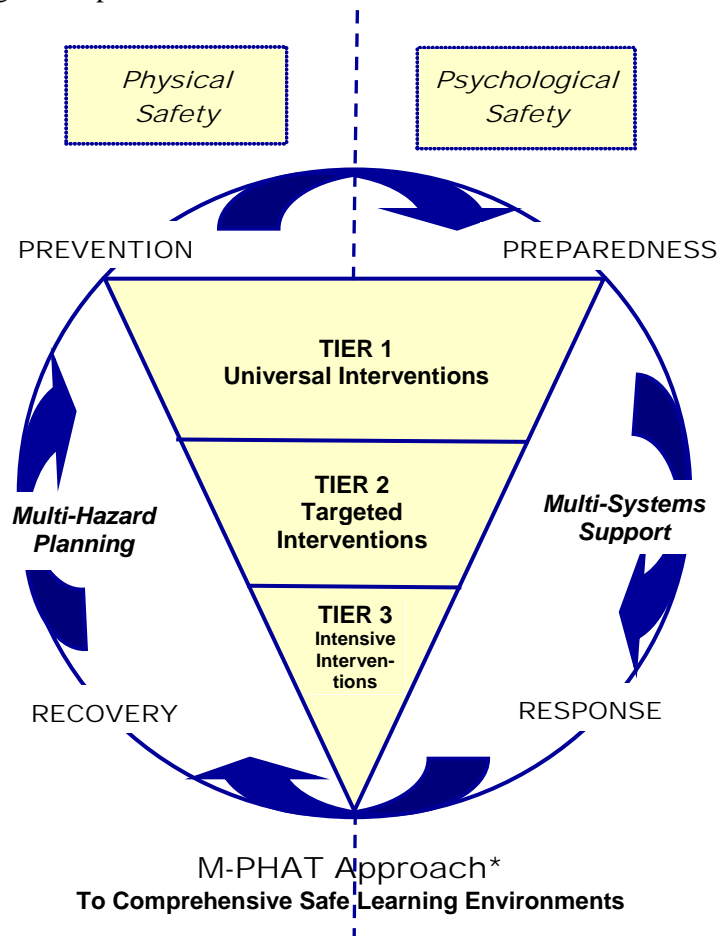# BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

The best practices summarized below are intended to improve school safety and access to a continuum of behavioral health care for all children and youth.

➢ **Integrate Services Through Cross-Systems Collaboration**
Fully integrate learning supports (i.e., behavioral, mental health and social services), student instruction and school management within a comprehensive, cohesive approach that facilitates cross-systems collaboration and partnerships.

➢ **Implement Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**
Collaboratively develop and implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (e.g., PBIS) encompassing prevention, wellness and interventions that increase in intensity, based on student needs and risk.

➢ **Improve Access to School-Based Mental Health Supports**
Improve access to school-based mental health supports by ensuring adequate staffing levels of school mental health practitioners, trained to infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and integrate those services through cross-systems collaborations into existing school initiatives.

➢ **Integrate School Safety and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery**
Integrate ongoing positive school climate and school safety efforts with evidence-based prevention, preparedness, response and recovery practices to ensure crisis planning, training and implementation are:
- Relevant to the school context;
- Reinforcing student learning;
- Maximizing existing staff;
- Facilitating effective threat assessment; and
- Reviewed, communicated and adopted by all systems.

➢ **Balance Student Physical and Psychological Safety**
- Balance students' physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures (e.g., armed guards) that may undermine the learning environment.
- Combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked doors) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships and encourage students and adults to report potential threats.
- If a school determines armed security personnel are needed, properly trained School Resource Officers are the only school staff of any type who should be armed.

➢ **Employ Effective, Positive School Discipline**
Employ positive, evidence-based school discipline that:
- Is aligned with school climate and school safety efforts;
- Is not simply punitive (e.g., zero tolerance practices);
- Is clear, consistent and equitable;
- Reinforces positive student behaviors; and
- Ensures continuity of learning in the least restrictive environment for suspended and expelled students.

➢ **Allow for Consideration of Context**
Consider the context of each school, district and community to ensure that the services and supports provided are the most needed, appropriate and culturally sensitive to the unique student population(s).

➢ **Effective, Sustainable Improvement takes Time and Commitment**
Acknowledge that sustainable and effective change takes time and patience. Individual schools, districts, system partners and communities will vary in their readiness to implement improvements in school safety and should be afforded adequate time and resources to sustain such change over time.

M-PHAT Approach*
To Comprehensive Safe Learning Environments