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## Making schools the focal point for child mental health: A U.S. National policy imperative

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This presentation examines the U.S. federal response to the crisis in child mental health in relation to its efforts to address the crisis in public education. By presenting side-by-side federal responses to these two seemingly unrelated crises, this presentation highlights the co-occurring nature of the problems. The interconnectedness of these crises explains in part why the federal initiatives that have dealt with these problems separately, in isolation, have been minimal in their effectiveness. It is concluded, therefore, that federal efforts in improving children's mental health and academic performance should be integrated to achieve optimal outcomes. From a national policy perspective, we recommend a broader accountability system that emphasizes both academic performance and social emotional development, and making schools the focal point for child mental health and bolstering the function of School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) services. School nurses can play an active role in helping effectuate such policy changes. Findings from an additional study compares the developmental trajectories of internalizing problems from kindergarten to fifth grade in young kindergarteners versus older peers in kindergarten will be presented. These findings further illustrate the unique roles that school nurses could play given their strategic positions in the schools.

### Biography

Guang Zeng completed her PhD in Policy Research, Evaluation and Measurement at University of Pennsylvania. As an Associate Professor at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, she has published reputed journals. She was previously a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) Faculty Fellow of American Evaluation Association (AEA). Further, she is a nationally certified Reviewer of single-case design research.

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