



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Developing Resiliency with Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success (DREAMS) Program Letter of Intent

School districts interested in being considered for admission in the DREAMS Program during the 2025-2026 school year must carefully read, complete, and sign this Letter of Intent. The Letter of Intent should be returned to the NJ Department of Education's Office of Student Support Services at SafeSupportiveSchools@doe.nj.gov by Friday, **February 21, 2025**. All applicants should save the date for the virtual orientation on **April 9, 2025 from 9:30am-10:30am**.

School District Name:

County:

DREAMS District Lead* #1 (Name & Title):

Email Address:

Phone:

OPTIONAL - DREAMS District Lead* #2 (Name & Title):

Email Address:

Phone:

*District Lead(s) will be point(s) of contact for communication and coordination of district or school champion team(s).

Check Here if you are a current or past DREAMS district applying to expand to additional schools in your district.

Complete sections 3 and 4. You *do not* need to complete section 5.

Section 1. DREAMS Project Overview

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC), will provide support to project school districts through the Developing Resiliency with Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success (DREAMS) Program during the 2025-2026 school year.

DREAMS assists in helping all students to increase their educational goals by supporting their mental and social-emotional health and wellness. DREAMS can also support staff with emotional regulation and wellness strategies to

prevent burnout.

Through DREAMS, a cohort of schools will be selected to enroll for the school year. The initiative will offer an onboarding introduction prior to the start of the school year, and implementation will continue through the end of the school year. At the conclusion, each cohort will join with the larger DREAMS community for ongoing connection and follow up support.

Schools will be invited to virtual trainings on trauma related topics such as Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma informed learning environments, and application of trauma informed practice for educators. Training is also provided in the Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA), which focuses on cultivating relationships and engagement to foster success through building individual Inner Wealth™. It is a tool for shifting to a strength-based culture that nurtures each youth's unique gifts and strengths through targeted training and consultation that will help staff manage challenges and serve in building the competency and capacity of school staff to help youth reach their full potential. There is also on-demand access to the evidence-based resource, the Six Core Strategies© overview, as well as other recorded enrichment presentations and materials on the DREAMS Canvas On-Demand page.

Section 2. District Assurances

Directions: Please review the following district assurances and sign below.

By signing below, the chief school administrator/charter school lead and principal indicate their approval of the school(s)/district's participation in all project activities and trainings and receipt of program services, as well as adherence to all assurances listed below. Please note that a district's inability to fully complete program requirements may result in lower-than-expected implementation efficacy.

Assurances

If selected to move forward as a DREAMS project district, school districts will:

- Attend a virtual orientation on **April 9th, 9:30-10:30 am** and a brief virtual meet and greet with your DREAMS Mentor between April-June 2025.
- Create and support a school/district NHA Champion team(s) to receive monthly mentoring and develop methods to implement NHA into school(s) (September 2025-June 2026).
- Create an implementation plan with the mentor for each team, focused on data, goals, and strategies.
- Participate in training and technical assistance associated with the project for the 2025-2026 school year:
 - Participate in an introductory Nurtured Heart Approach® training
 - Trauma Foundational Series hosted by Rutgers University Behavioral Healthcare
 - School/classroom focused NHA enrichment sessions
 - Rutgers on-demand CANVAS training platform (available to all staff).
- Select up to two representatives from your district who will become NHA Certified Trainers and will:
 - Attend a pre-requisite six-hour NHA training prior to the weeklong Certified Training Intensive (CTI).
 - Attend 5 Day Certified Training Intensive (CTI) on Zoom where they will receive certification to train other district staff in NHA (**December 8-12, 2025, full-day M-Th (7.5 hours) and Fri. 5.5 hours; daily start/end times to be determined**). **District leadership will provide resources needed to ensure staff time to attend these hours.**
 - Receive post-CTI support from DREAMS staff and mentors and be provided space, prep time, and an opportunity to train school staff (and parents/caregivers if desired) from district leadership.
- Connect with a representative from NJ Department of Children and Families (DCF) up to two times to provide feedback.
- Use district data (e.g., New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJSCI) or other available school/district data) to determine needs, identify areas of improvement, and monitor progress.
 - Share data with NJDCF as requested and any noted improvements.
 - Provide an update to the implementation plan at the end of the school year for ongoing training and sustainability.

- To enhance effectiveness of DREAMS implementation, it is highly encouraged (but not required) to dedicate 2 Professional Development and/or In Service opportunities for NHA training for school/district to build capacity (August 2025-June 2026).

Section 3. Select Type of Champion Team(s) Requested:

A DREAMS champion team should consist of representatives from each school(s) and include a district administrator, school leadership, teachers, student support services staff, child study team, paraprofessionals, etc. who will attend monthly meetings with their assigned DREAMS community mentor for the duration of the school year (September 2025- June 2026).

Please note that your request for the number of teams and schools may be configured differently than what you indicate below. This will be determined by DCF/Rutgers UBHC/Mentor prior to your meet and greet based on mentor capacity. You can request more than one champion team. When considering the number of teams to create, please note that each team will act independently and be expected to meet with their DREAMS mentor monthly, along with periodic check ins as needed.

Step 1: Number of schools targeted for initiative:

List schools by grade level:

Step 2: Team(s) composition: (Individual School Team(s) and/or Multi-School Team(s)): Please select how to configure your champion team(s). For example, you could request one or more individual school teams, one or more multi-school teams, or a combination of both. Remember, each team has the requirement to meet monthly with the DREAMS mentor and create an implementation plan focused on the needs of that team.

Individual School Team: The team will consist of selected staff from **one** school. You can request multiple individual school teams. For example, a district with three schools (an elementary, middle, and high school) can request three separate individual teams, one for each school.

How many individual teams requested:

List the name of each school with grade level served:

Team 1

Team 2

Team 3

If requesting more than three individual school teams, please list them below:

Multi-School Team: The team will consist of multiple schools on **one** team. It is recommended that a multi-school team consist of schools of the same grade level/similar schedules and representatives from each school must be able to meet monthly together. For example, if a district has 3 elementary schools, all three schools could form a single multi-school team.

Indicate number of multi-school teams requested:

List the names of schools to be on a team together: (It is recommended that multi-school teams are comprised of 4 or less schools per team)

Team 1

Team 2

Team 3

If requesting more than three multi-school teams, please list them below:

Section 4. Name of Chief School Administrator/Charter School Lead and District Leads Participating

CSA/CSL and district lead(s) (the one or two individuals named at the top of this LOI) signatures are required and indicate that the principals of the targeted schools agree with the assurance of this letter of intent.

Chief School Administer/Charter School Lead Name

Chief School Administer/Charter School Lead Signature

District Lead 1 Name

District Lead 1 Signature

(OPTIONAL) District Lead 2 Name

District Lead 2 Signature

Though not required, if any principals of targeted schools (designated in Section 1) would also like to provide their signature in support of this project, they may do so below:

(Optional) Principal Name

Principal Signature

(Optional) Principal Name

Principal Signature

(Optional) Principal Name

Principal Signature

NOTE: Applications can be submitted while pending Board of Education Approval. It is the responsibility of the applying district to obtain all approvals to participate in DREAMS.

Section 5. Rationale for Participation

If your response requires more space than provided below, you may attach additional sheets as necessary.

DISTRICT NAME:

Please describe your targeted school(s) or district need for this initiative. Please also share any data your district/targeted school(s) collects or is willing to collect to track during the initiative. (Examples of areas of need: discipline/suspension rates, school climate, staff morale/attrition, student absences, substance misuse rate, behavioral health, etc.)

Please describe your school or district capacity to implement this initiative. (Examples of capacity: knowledge of NHA, full leadership support of the time commitment for meetings and trainings, staffing/staff support, fiscal support, technology/data systems, contracted school-based consultants, specific other school wide initiatives/ programs currently implementing, etc.)