**Mental Health**

The Director of Special Education has been through the North Dakota Trauma Sensitive Schools Training. The EPP’s Dean of the School of Education and Graduate Studies arranged for the EPP’s Director of Special Education to share the Trauma Sensitive Schools Training experiences with the EPP’s faculty members. The EPP prepares teacher candidates with courses in psychology, developmental psychology, and educational psychology courses as well as EDUC 240 Educating Exceptional Students and Classroom Management. These courses combine to address issues related to the developing brain, social and emotional learning, and trauma.

Behavioral health and trauma are important topics for teacher candidates to learn about before entering the profession. The EPP recognizes the growing need for preparation related to behavioral health. As part of teacher preparation and accreditation, the EPP ensures candidates for teacher licensure demonstrate competencies in youth mental health.

Teacher candidates in EDUC 240 Educating Exceptional Students learn about the prevalence and impact of youth mental health disorders on family structures, education, juvenile services, law enforcement, and health care and treatment providers. Teacher candidates are able to identify a variety of mental health and social emotional disorders, as well as support personnel, health and treatment providers, and local, state, and national resources.

Teacher candidates in EDUC 240 Educating Exceptional Students gain knowledge of mental health symptoms and characteristics. Teacher candidates also learn about social stigmas that may occur due to a lack of understanding by family, friends, peers, or others.

The EPP’s teacher candidates participate in a two-part training on understanding strategies and interventions in schools. Teacher candidates also gain awareness of referral sources and strategies for appropriate interventions ([Evidence link](https://www.tcty-nd.org/clinicians/)).   
  
The EPP gathers data from teacher candidates at the time of graduation, completers in their first year of teaching, and the employers of first year teachers to learn how our completers are performing and to help the program make informed decisions for continuous improvement. While the EPP tries to cover as many classroom and student situations as possible that a new teacher may face, there is no doubt that teachers are challenged as they respond to complicated student and classroom issues. The Exit Survey data displayed the clearest example of how the EPP needed to strive for improvement in the teacher candidates’ preparation in mental health ([Evidence Mental Health Data](https://vcsuintasc.myefolio.com/Intasc2021/Uploads/Evidence%20for%20Mental%20Health%20Data%20.pdf)). The data indicated that the EPP’s efforts to provide additional preparation in behavioral and mental health training are making a difference.