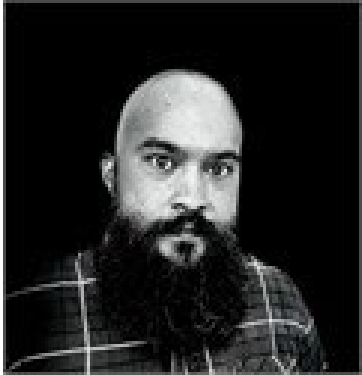


Broadening the Youth Suicide Prevention Landscape:

**A Partnership with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
and the Campus Suicide Prevention Center of Virginia
(CSPCV)**

Meet the VDH Suicide Systems Project Team



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Learning Objectives

1. Describe the Virginia Department of Health's strategic approach to suicide prevention work;
2. Define wicked problem, system, complex system, foresight, Human Learning Systems, buffer, horizon scanning, systematize, Minimum Viable Product;
3. Explain the role of systems thinking in addressing suicide as a complex problem;
4. Identify pathways to engage campuses in your work.
(shared learning objective across presentation and activity).



Key Terms

- Wicked Problems – complex social or policy issues with no clear solution.
- Systems – a collection of “things” achieving an end fulfilling a purpose.
- Complex System – nonlinearity, emergence, adaptation, feedback
- Foresight – the ability of an organization to **perceive**, make **sense** of, and **act** upon ideas about future change emerging in the present.
- Human Learning Systems – a management alternative which center’s humans as priority, learning as essential strategy, and systems as unit of analysis.
- Buffer – the ability of a program to create space in a grant ecosystem which maintains deliverables and protects experimentation.
- Horizon Scanning – seeking, searching, and building avenues for information flow.
- Systematize – the arrangement of potentially disparate elements of work into a coherent plan or scheme.
- Minimum Viable Product – an early state of a product that contains the minimum number of elements to be useful in achieving its end.

Virginia Suicide Prevention Characteristics

- Code of Virginia establishes
 - Virginia Dept. of Health (VDH) – lead agency for youth suicide prevention
 - Virginia Dept of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) – lead agency across the lifespan
 - Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services – lead agency for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families
 - Virginia Dept. of Criminal Justice Services – oversees threat assessment teams in public schools
 - Virginia Dept. of Education – primary public education arm, develops school-based guidelines for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention
- Suicide Prevention Interagency Advisory Group (SPIAG)
 - Co-chaired by VDH and DBHDS
- Patchwork of non-profit safety net supports
- Some requirements for community helper training in a variety of systems (schools, behavioral health)

Our Approach

#	Strategy	Activities
1	Identify Gaps in Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention	a. Collect, analyze, evaluate, and publish data. b. Gather input from partner groups and people with lived experience. This input helps to understand state and local needs and opportunities.
2	Make Prevention Efforts Stronger to Fill Gaps	a. Stand up 3 centers to provide support for settings that need suicide prevention supports. These are known as “hubs.”* b. Grow leaders within the hubs.

***The hubs include:**

- i. The K-12 School - Campus Hub supports K-12 schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities.
- ii. The Virginia Zero Suicide Hub supports hospital, behavioral health, and community settings.
- iii. The Virginia Postvention Hub supports suicide postvention statewide. An area of focus is K-12 schools.

Our Approach

#	Strategy	Activities
3	Improve and Expand Care	a. Support access to high-quality clinical care and care coordination.**
4	Support People and Communities After a Suicide Loss (Suicide Postvention)	a. Provide K-12 school staff and community members with training and tools needed to prepare for and respond to a loss. b. Support those who lost a loved one with grief support groups and care coordination.

****This happens through:**

- i. Systems level change in healthcare settings using the Zero Suicide framework,
- ii. Trainings for healthcare providers, school staff, and community members,
- iii. Encouraging screening and assessment in primary care and specialist care settings, and
- iv. Providing funding to 2 non-profit clinics to strengthen counseling, treatment, and follow-up care.

Our Approach

#	Strategy	Activities
5	Help Key Partners Work Together	a. Connect key partners, including those with lived experience through the Suicide Prevention Interagency Advisory Group (SPIAG). b. Share and highlight creative strategies. c. Come together to build upon current work.
6	Use Data to Help Make Better Decisions	a. Build skills of VDH staff and key partners to understand and use data to better serve communities.

Campus 101: A Few Pathways to Campus Engagement

There are many pathways to a conversation:

- GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grants - explore awards in your state as a connection point
- Recent suicide loss on campus
- State councils on higher education
- Changes in state code impacting the campus
- Counseling programs, counseling centers, etc.
- Healthy Minds Study, or other beneficial surveys etc.
- Universities conducting suicide research

What can you fund (think seed funding) one time, that opens the door to a lasting partnership?

*When all options fail, go where the people go.**

*This is not a “nothing about us without us” concept, it is an acknowledgement that the hill is steep, but every attempt tempers your next effort.



The VDH and CSPCV Story

2009 CPSCV Established

Receives GLS Campus grant
Champion/executive director identified
Connection w/VDH for TA
CPSCV forms via VDH & JMU
– funding partnership begins

CSPCV 2020 – 2023

Center expansion
More community helper trainings
TA to Virginia Community College System
Public health upstream approach explored

CSPCV 2026 – And Beyond

TA support expanded to public K-12 schools
Partnerships expanded to include state agencies
Internal capacity development to apply for grants

CSPCV 2009 – 2020 (Pre-Strategic Shift)

Connections to Virginia IHEs
Healthy Minds Study
Community helper training
TA for prevention, intervention, postvention on college campuses

CSPCV 2023 – 2026

GLS ARPA, MCH, General Funds
Shift away from training, move towards TA, coalition building, leadership
Systems science as foundation to suicide prevention

How do we measure some of the processes and outcomes? What have we observed so far?

400+

People trained in
institutes of higher
education and K-12
schools statewide

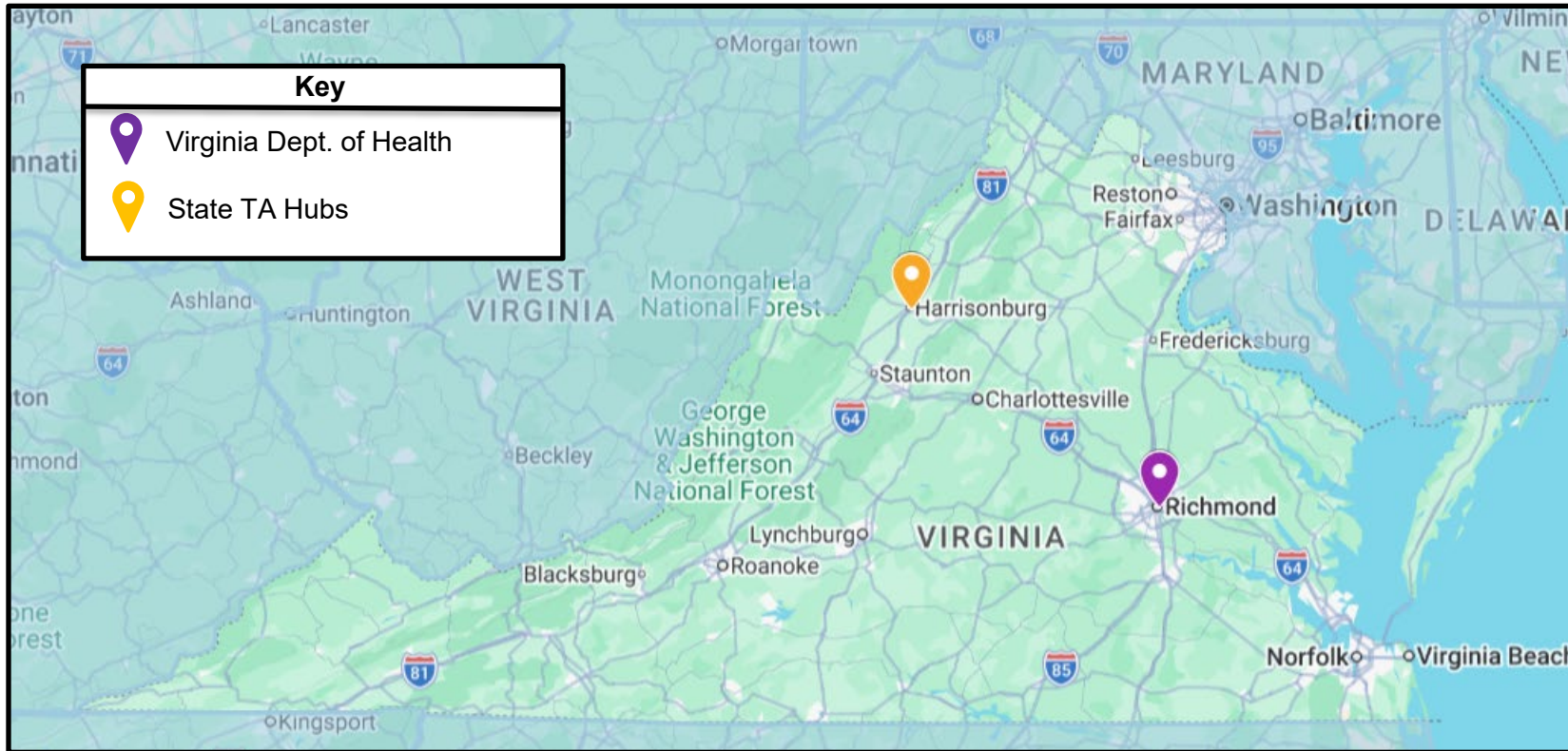
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School divisions
participating in the
SupportiveTogether
Learning Collaborative

10+

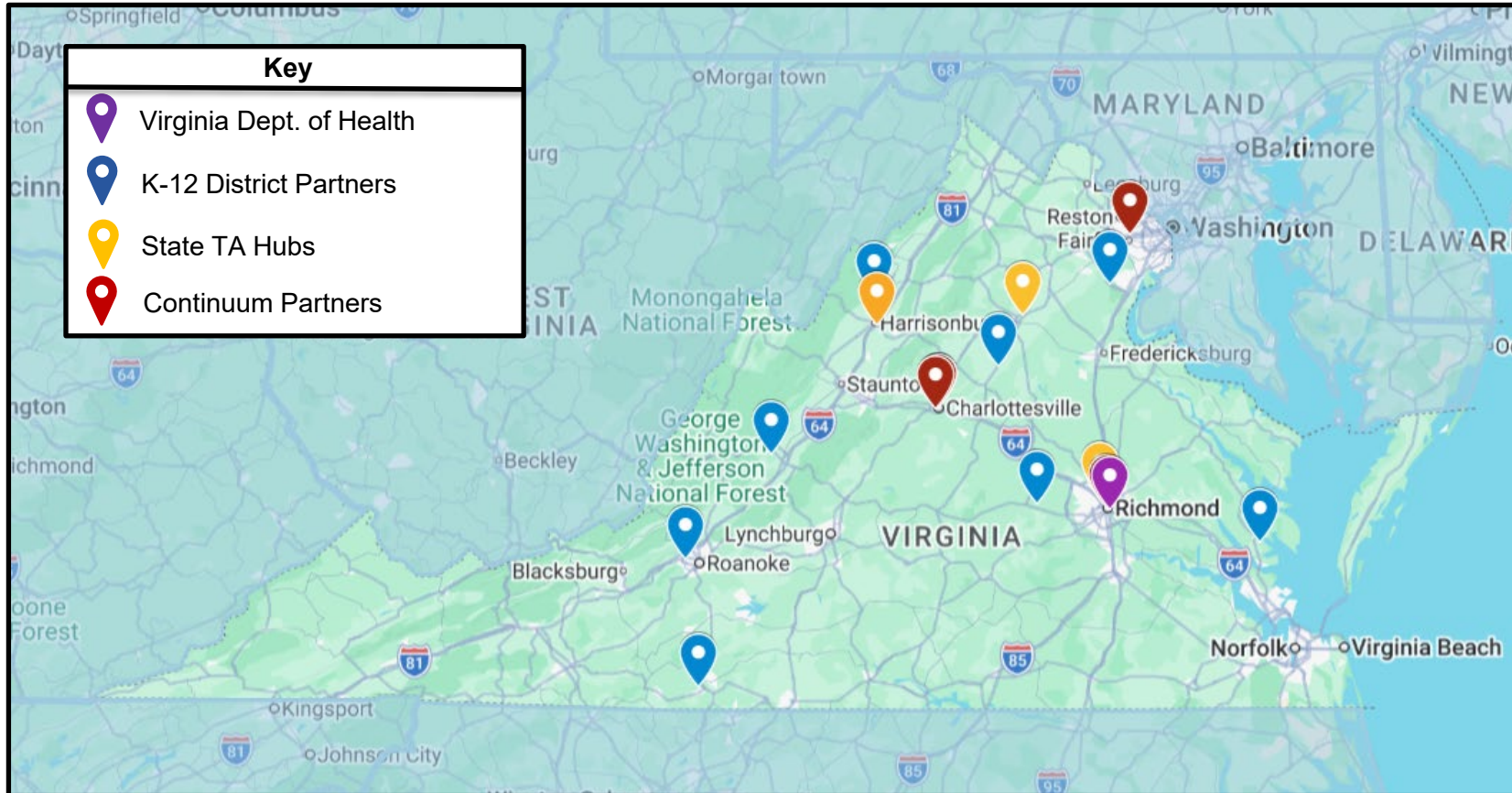
Partnerships
championed for youth
suicide prevention
across multisector
agencies

Suicide Prevention Program – Partner Map (2020)



2020 map of partnerships (pre-2022 pivot to a systems model)

Suicide Systems Project – Partner Map (2026)



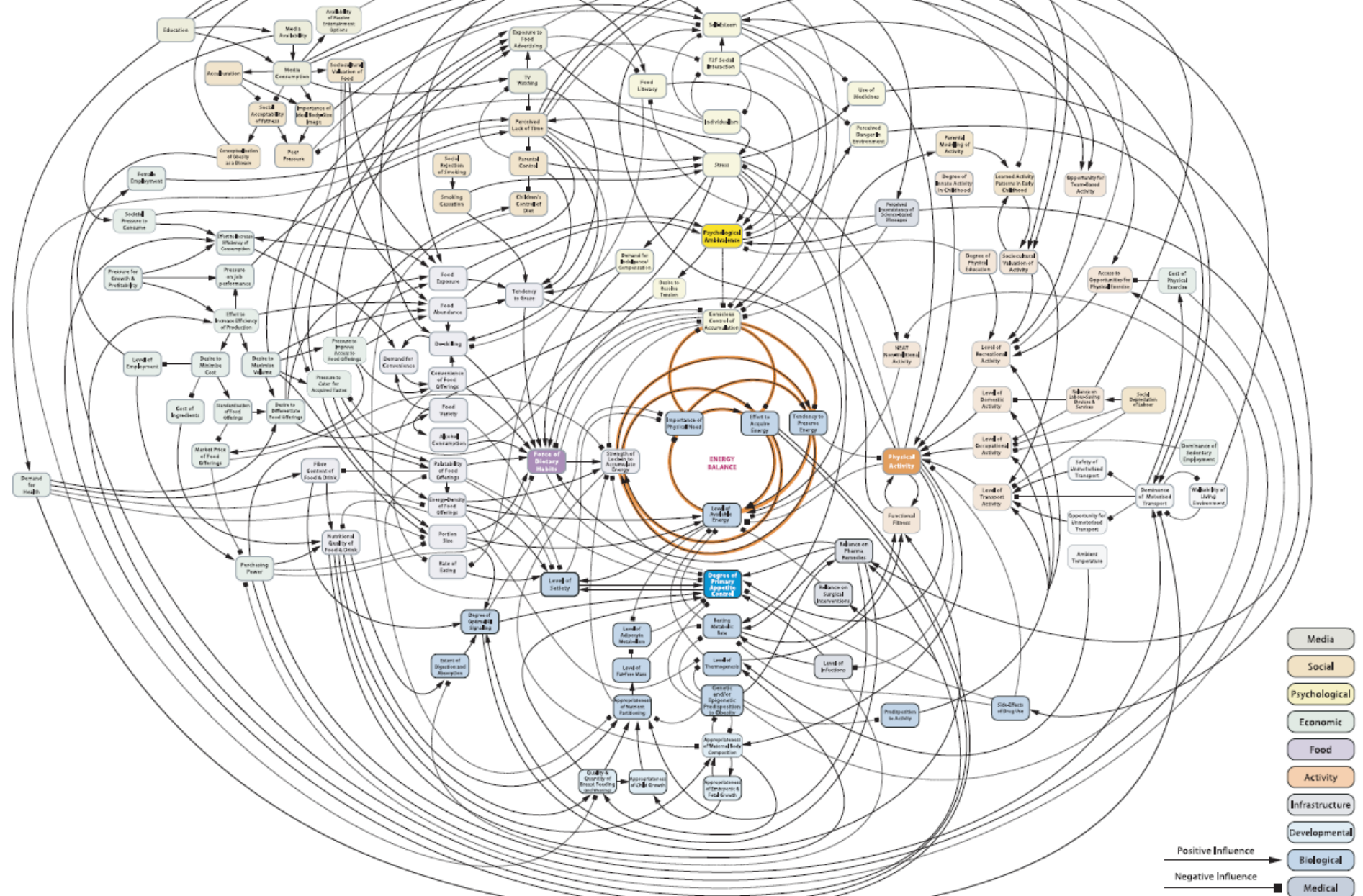
2026 - the SSP has developed multiple projects, implementation sites, and continuum partners to move towards addressing complex system issues.

Systems Thinking in Suicide Work

- What are complex systems?
- What do we do with a complex system lens? A note on **Foresight**.
- What does it mean to move from a linear cause and effect project where an individual is prioritized, to a complex systems project where environment is the focus of intervention?



Okay
What
Does
That
Mean?



What is the K-12 expansion and what does it look like?

- **Leading change**, building a connected continuum of care
 - K-12 Learning Collaborative
 - Training Gap Analysis
 - Training recommendations to advance antiquated state practices
 - Integration of CAMS into Virginia community college and four-year institutional systems
 - Position CSPCV as an essential partner of the Virginia Department of Education
 - Develop legislative analysis capacity and design products to support new and changing laws within the campus space
 - High school transitions project

Passive to Active – We Are Not A Help Desk

Passive Approach

- Respond to presentation and training requests
- Provide technical assistance as requested
- Develop guidance documents and resources for online dissemination
- Center funder priorities at the expense of community needs
- Implement pre-packaged programming as requested



Active Approach

- Develop presentations and training based on data in Virginia communities
- Develop internal capacity to address technical assistance needs and anticipate future needs
- Develop guidance documents and resources to be used in relationship with partners in the communities where work is being performed
- Execute funder priorities while advancing needs of communities in conversation w/ funders
- Identify, design, and execute custom-made programs for communities based on needs
- Provide direction and critical feedback on community asks

Recap on the Virginia Campus Partnership

- Established in 2009, CSPCV has trained thousands of Virginia educators and community members in a variety of community helper trainings
- CSPCV has developed hundreds of hours of educational content specific to the campus context
- Virginia has access to a leader in campus prevention, intervention, and postvention support for the campus context
- Virginia can provide guidance to other states re: campus support
- CSPCV as a network node has seen an exponential increase in engagement
- The project, from a systems lens, is now interconnected and interdependent with three additional Virginia TA hubs creating shared direction

What are some lessons learned?

- Orienting the work towards a systems lens requires consistent technical assistance and support beyond content area
- Bi-directional exchange of information is an outcome and a signal; it must be constantly supported
- A system approach to suicide may be a new framework for partner organizations, requiring additional support at the start
- Funding does not typically support systems work; instead, it often emphasizes linear or downstream projects – buffer concept is essential
- A constant refrain - forest for the trees

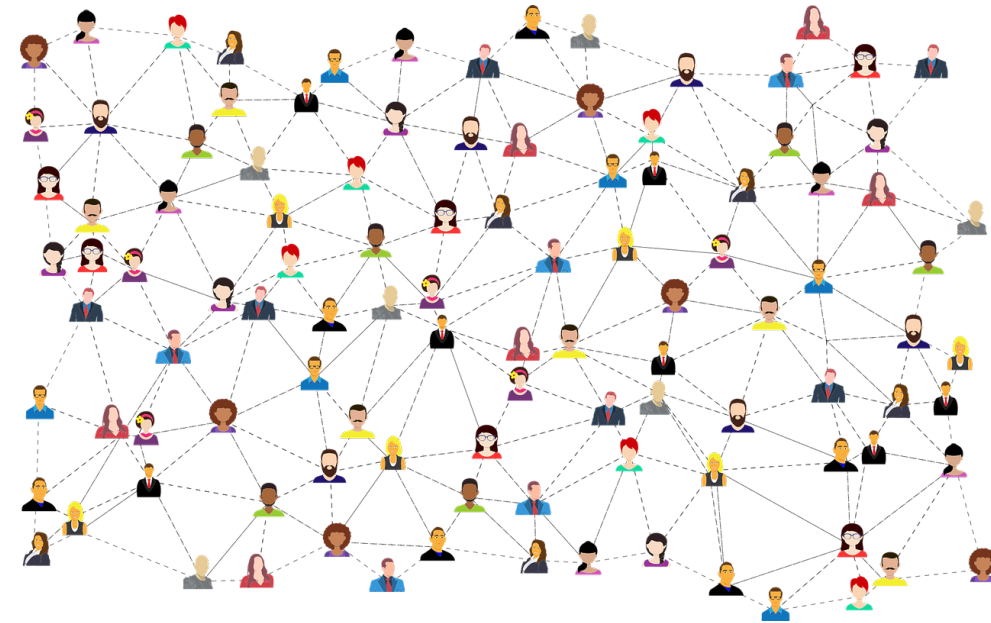
Tools and Techniques to Inform a Campus System Project



- Braided funding – the world is not siloed, funding shouldn't be either
- Seek learning opportunities surrounding System Science
- Brainstorm a strategy that would support the “buffer concept”
- Human, Learning, Systems – specifically, learning as a mandatory elements of the work (outside of suicide prevention)

Where do we anticipate going next?

- Continue to prioritize interconnection and interdependence of all Virginia hubs
- Deepen systems science knowledge in the context of suicide – perceive, make, sense, act
- Increase visibility to cement hubs as leaders within the Virginia Suicide Systems Continuum
- Maintain technical assistance capacity as it relates to systems approach
- Continue to strengthen grant writing capacity across partners and identify shared application strategies
- Expand beyond mental health and suicide specific funding: schools, SEL, bullying, SDoH funding, etc.
- Support constant learning not as a nice-to-have but as a must have



Resources

- Sante Fe Institute – [Complexity Explorer](#)
- Observatory of Public Sector Innovation – [Futures & Foresight](#)
- Human Learning Systems – [An Introduction to HLM](#)
- Safe States – [Blending, Braiding, Layering Funding](#)
- Thinking in Systems – Donella H. Meadows
- Rethinking Suicide – Craig Bryan



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