

THE STEVE FUND

10 YEARS OF IMPACT

Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being of Young People

The Steve Fund promotes the mental health and emotional well-being of all young people, particularly those from underserved and under-resourced communities, by equipping them, their families, educators, and mental health professionals with the knowledge, skills, and community support needed to achieve their full potential.

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A Message From the President

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

For ten years, The Steve Fund has championed a simple but powerful belief: every young person deserves the mental health and emotional support needed to thrive. Guided by this vision, we have built a movement grounded in cultural responsiveness and committed to transforming the systems that shape young people's well-being.

Over the past decade, we've worked with campuses, communities, and employers nationwide to embed mental health into everyday environments, strengthening belonging, building trust, and creating sustainable systems of care. Our initiatives, including Excellence in Mental Health on Campus (EMHC), show that when institutions center equity and culture in their approach, young people flourish.

This work has never been more urgent. Young people across the nation continue to face unprecedented challenges—stress, isolation, and inequities in access and care. Yet we know what works: collaboration, compassion, and commitment. The Steve Fund stands ready to lead alongside you—expanding partnerships, scaling proven models, and shaping a future where every young person feels supported, seen, and valued.

We are deeply grateful to our donors, partners, and champions who make this work possible. Your belief fuels our mission and propels our impact. Together, we can continue to transform environments and lives, advancing mental health, belonging, and flourishing for generations to come.

With deep gratitude,

Stephanie Bell-Rose, J.D., M.P.A.

President, The Steve Fund

A Message From the Board Chair

Dear Partners, Funders, and Stakeholders,

Youth mental health is at a defining moment. Systems supporting young people are strained, needs are intensifying, and coverage disruptions threaten care. Long-standing supports are diminishing, deepening challenges for underserved communities. We hear stories of disconnection and anxiety, seeing widening gaps in access and outcomes.

The Steve Fund is meeting this moment with focus, building on ten years of evidence and community engagement. We are scaling youth-guided, culturally responsive solutions designed with families. Our work is anchored by four flagship efforts:

- **My Digital Sanctuary:** A youth-designed platform offering connection, coping tools, and pathways to care.
- **Family & Caregiver Support:** Training and resources to equip adults in recognizing risk factors and the need for help.
- **Economic Mobility & Mental Health:** Integrated supports linking emotional wellness and opportunity along the school-to-career continuum.
- **HBCU Initiative:** Partnerships to strengthen mental health infrastructure at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their surrounding communities.

These initiatives align with our strategy to:

1. Transform environments across schools, non-profits, and workplaces to actively promote mental health for all youth, especially those from underserved communities.
2. Equip young people and families with skills, tools, and culturally attuned mental health resources for emotional well-being and success.
3. Shape the field through research, programs, and thought leadership to advance delivery and expand access to high-quality mental health support.

Stewardship matters. We are committed to responsible growth, rigorous measurement, data privacy, youth voice, and transparent learning. As Board Chair, I affirm our commitments to rigorous measurement, responsible growth, data privacy, youth voice in governance, and transparent learning. As society navigates this unprecedented terrain, we invite you to join our community of action so every young person can access responsive mental health care.

With determination, hope, and respect,

Byron D. Clift Breland Ph.D.

Chair, Board of Directors, The Steve Fund

A Decade of Impact in Numbers

The Steve Fund

10M +

Young People Reached Nationwide

Through our many collaborations and our digital platforms

CRISIS TEXT LINE

6k+ Individual users

11,000+ Conversations

46 Lives saved

PARTNERED WITH

250+

Institutions and organizations

to provide training, programs, and services in support of the mental health of young people

MY DIGITAL SANCTUARY

3.4M Young People Engaged

With a 69% return visitor rate and 250+ user-generated submissions

50+

National Conference Presentations

shaping the national dialogue on equity in student mental health

15+

Research Projects

on the state of young people and family mental health nationwide

EMHC INITIATIVE

66 Colleges & Universities Participating in 22 states

1,125,000+

STUDENTS IMPACTED

through programs, workshops, summits, and listening sessions

STRENGTHENED COLLABORATIONS WITH

- **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities** (HACU) representing 600 campuses)
- **United Negro College Fund** (UNCF) 37 member institutions
- **State University of New York** (SUNY) 64 campuses
- **Phi Theta Kappa** (300,000 student members)

5M

Families reached since 2022

with knowledge and skill-building to support the mental health of young people

WORKFORCE TRANSITIONS

465K

Reached since 2020 through 72 workshops, seminars, and thought leadership convenings

98% feel equipped to take action in support of the mental health and emotional well-being of young employees

EDUCATION & WORKSHOPS

85% of students reported improved understanding of mental health resources and strategies after attending a Steve Fund workshop/seminar/presentation

84% of workshop and seminar participants are very likely to incorporate mental health and wellness topics to their life

95% of public event attendees are very likely to incorporate mental health and wellness topics addressed to their life

100% of families and caregivers said they were very likely to apply the Protective Factors in their caregiving role

The Steve Fund at 10 Years





Focused on the Mission

During the 10 years since its founding, the Steve Fund has become a leading nonprofit dedicated to promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of young people, particularly those from underserved and under-resourced communities.

Our programs, resources, and events are designed to engage collaboratively with universities, colleges, nonprofits, and workforce organizations in improving their support for the mental health and well-being of young people and increasing the impact of these efforts. We leverage a dynamic combination of partnerships, research, and community-aligned resources to support families and young people during key moments of growth and transition — from adolescence into higher education, through the college experience, and into the workforce.

Together with our partners in higher education, business, research, and mental health, we promote strategies and programs to foster understanding, provide support, and improve outcomes so that all young people can attain personal, academic, and career success.

We have created a Community of Action. Join us!

10 Years, 10 Impact Highlights

Over the past decade, considerable resources have been invested in the Steve Fund by many generous individuals, foundations, corporations, and partners — enabling us to achieve a fundamental and intertwined pair of objectives: to build an effective national Community of Action including people from all backgrounds, sectors, cultures, and regions to support our mental health vision, and to successfully deliver a strategic portfolio of high impact programs and resources precisely aligned to achieve our mission.

Below are 10 pivotal actions and initiatives that highlight how the Steve Fund has grown, stretched, and contributed uniquely over the past 10 years.

1. Inception, Foundations, and Purpose
2. Early Initiatives that Sparked Momentum
3. Spotlighting Youth Voices and Perspectives
4. Building Partnerships to Forge a Community of Action
5. Research that Translates to Action and Helps Shape the Field
6. Supporting Families on the Front Line
7. Technology and Innovation
8. Building the Mental Health Field by Leading Outreach and Engagement
9. HBCU Initiative: Strengthening Mental Health Infrastructure
10. Mental Health and Persistence Initiative

1 Inception, Foundations, and Purpose

The Steve Fund was founded in 2014 in response to a profound family loss and a deep conviction: that all young people deserve culturally responsive, affirming mental health supports to thrive in school, work, and life. A small group of co-founders, including family and friends of Steve, established a nonprofit organization out of a desire to honor the compassion and integrity with which Steve lived his life. The core purpose was to ensure that all young people have access to the resources, skills, expertise, and mental health care they need. At the time, youth mental health was beginning to break into the national conversation, yet the nuanced needs and experiences of young people were not yet sufficiently addressed.

After extensive consultations with mental health and education experts, our initial efforts focused on young people transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, particularly those from under-resourced communities. This emerging adult period carries an increased risk for mental health concerns, with an estimated three-fourths of all mental health conditions emerging by age 24. Other areas we found to be in great need of attention were family supports, and supports for organizations that work with young people — higher education and secondary institutions, teachers and staff, student organizations, nonprofits serving youth and communities, and employers.

“

The Steve Fund normalizes mental health by saying, ‘It’s okay to not be okay,’ and by making mental health part of everyday conversations.

DR. GINA DUNCAN

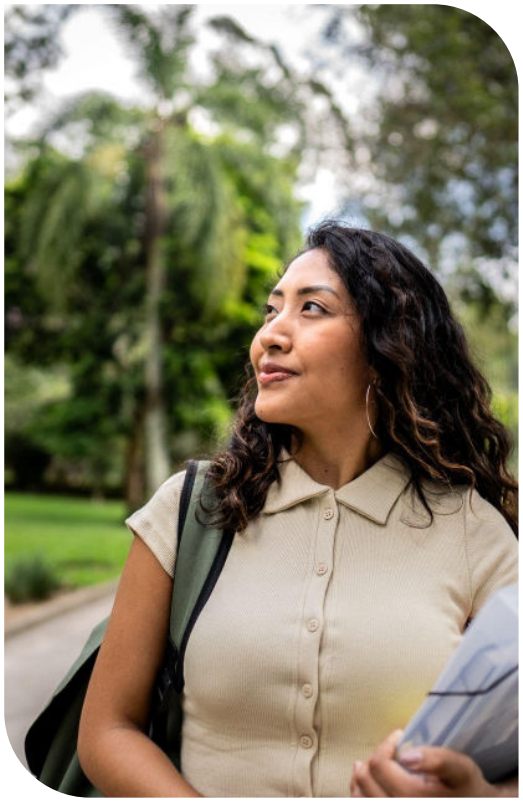
Mental Health Expert Advisor to The Steve Fund

“

The Steve Fund was founded in 2014 after my brother’s passing. We sat in our dining room as a family and decided: we need to find a way to help so that other families won’t have to feel like they’re suffering alone.

EVAN ROSE

Co-Founder, Board Chair Emeritus, and Member of Steve Fund Board of Directors



1 Inception, Foundations, and Purpose, *continued*

> **By really centering the unique experience of students of different backgrounds and developing a way of communicating that to a wider audience, including faculty, administrators, families, policymakers, and mental health professionals, the Steve Fund helped put this issue on the map and create a community of action.**
>
> **DR. ANNELLE PRIMM**
> Senior Medical Director of The Steve Fund



The Steve Fund began by convening stakeholders, including higher education leaders, nonprofits, and families, to address the lack of directed mental health resources. We began reaching out to engage with campuses around the country, developing programs and workshops aimed at reducing stigma and promoting mental health awareness, knowledge, and access to care. We partnered on a national research poll to better understand the needs and develop more effective resources and programs.

The recognition gained from this growing knowledge base and team of experts resulted in the Steve Fund being called upon to help campuses respond to mental health-related crises.

What began as a small, passionate organization has grown into one of the nation's leading nonprofits focused on the mental health and emotional well-being of young people, particularly those from underserved and under-resourced communities. Over the past decade, the Steve Fund has elevated youth voices, shaped the field, built groundbreaking frameworks, and created innovative programs that have touched millions of lives, determinedly including all while centering those who had not previously received adequate focus, attention, access, and support.

The Steve Fund

2 Early Initiatives that Sparked Momentum

Excellence in Mental Health on Campus Initiative

In 2016, the Steve Fund and the Jed Foundation launched a bold effort to address mental health challenges among college students, especially among students from underserved communities.

The Equity in Mental Health Framework offered an evidence-based, actionable set of recommendations designed to help campuses foster inclusive environments and support the emotional well-being of under-resourced students. The Framework provided institutions with tools and specific strategies to reduce stigma, improve campus climate, and expand culturally responsive services.

Today, the Framework anchors a signature Steve Fund initiative, the Excellence in Mental Health on Campus (EMHC) program, helping higher education nationwide to reshape how to think about and activate support for every student. The program is effectively transforming college environments by raising the bar on culturally responsive approaches for access to mental health services, practices, policies, and resources.

> “
>
> **The Steve Fund emphasizes that mental health and well-being should not just be siloed into the counseling center. The integration of mental health should be a conversation that impacts every single corner of the institution—professors, financial aid, student leaders**
>
> **DR. NARCISA POLONIO**
>
> Higher Education Expert Advisor to the Steve Fund

EMHC FRAMEWORK

66 COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES ENGAGED

1,126,000+
STUDENTS IMPACTED
through programs, workshops, summits, and listening sessions

92% of participants were better prepared to center the mental health of all students

93% reported enhanced cultural responsiveness of counseling staff

2 Early Initiatives that Sparked Momentum, *continued*

> **Collaborating on the Young, Gifted & Resilient conference served as a valuable opportunity for faculty, staff, administrators, and students on the frontlines of mental health and wellness in higher education to share their challenges, experiences, strategies, resources, and successes. It prominently highlighted and brought collective attention to this important issue.**
>
> **DR. FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ**
> Chancellor, CUNY

Young, Gifted & Resilient Conference Series

The Steve Fund has hosted 10 Young, Gifted & Resilient conferences across the nation. This flagship conference series brings together diverse stakeholders to help institutional partners focus on mental health in the context of their respective campuses and local communities.

The events shine a spotlight on the hosting school's challenges and efforts to improve student mental health, helping higher education improve, one campus at a time. Among the campuses that have hosted conferences in collaboration with the Steve Fund are the University of Michigan, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Stanford University, University of Texas at Austin, and City University of New York.



3 Spotlighting Youth Voices and Perspectives



“

Recognizing the need to support students earlier in their academic careers, the Steve Fund created the Well-Being in Color program to train peer educators about mental health and well-being in schools. Today, the program is growing to support students on college campuses, helping to build a community of action in support of mental health for all.

DR. JANICE BEAL
Steve Fund Mental Health Expert

Youth Ambassador Board

From the outset, the Steve Fund has sought to incorporate, uplift, and foster youth participation and perspectives. The Steve Fund's Youth Ambassador Board (YAB) is composed of students from across the nation representing a range of backgrounds and experiences. They provide valuable insights and youth perspectives that inform timely resources and programming for young people and those who serve them.

YAB members act as mental health ambassadors online, in-person, and in their communities, undertaking activities to support and promote the mental health and emotional well-being of college students. Over the years, YAB members have advised the Steve Fund’s programs and priorities; developed the Steve Fund’s first podcast series, “SpeakOnIt!”; represented the Steve Fund on national conference panels; been interviewed by journalists, including for a Chronicle of Higher Education special report on student resilience; and undertaken new initiatives to raise awareness.

Empowering Peer Supporters

The Steve Fund provides training and education for youth, building their knowledge of mental health resources, coping skills, and self-care, and giving them the tools not only to help take care of themselves but to become advocates, capable of actively supporting their peers.

4 Building Partnerships to Forge a Community of Action

Since the formation of the Steve Fund, our philosophy and approach has been to work in partnership with mental health organizations and experts, schools, higher education institutions, families, caregivers, and employers. These partners bring tremendous depth of knowledge and expertise, along with a broad network of connections and reach to enable timely, culturally appropriate, scientifically sound, and effective programs and initiatives.

Partnerships are an important pillar of the Steve Fund and one of the strategic approaches we utilize to develop a Community of Action in support of the mental health and emotional well-being of young people. We have made real progress in building this Community of Action, including individuals, organizations, corporations, foundations, and more, working in support of the mental health and well-being of young people. Illustrative non-profit collaborations include:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness,** to support families from underserved communities
- **Morgan Stanley Alliance for Children's Mental Health**, to address critical mental health challenges for youth
- **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities,** to support students at participating campuses
- **The Child Mind Institute,** for collaboration on mental health research
- **United Negro College Fund,** for partnership on the HBCU Mental Health Survey, strategic mental health convenings and programming
- **Crisis Text Line,** for accessible, culturally appropriate crisis response



"

The Steve Fund helps institutions think through how they can remove barriers to student success, transforming resources and the way that we deliver wellness services to be more accessible for students.

DR. CARLOTA OCAMPO

Steve Fund Board Member and Provost, Trinity Washington University

NEARLY 200 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

providing training, programs, and services in support of the mental health of young people

4 Building Partnerships to Forge a Community of Action, *continued*

Recent multilateral partnerships have proven particularly effective in supporting efforts across sectors to promote the mental health of young people:

- To support teachers in addressing student mental health, the Steve Fund partnered with Google, Donors Choose, the Child Mind Institute, and the Jed Foundation to launch a new national mental health initiative.

- The Steve Fund partners with employers to support the mental health and success of young employees through the Steve Fund's Workforce Transitions Initiative, which develops customized educational programs to help employers enable all young people to thrive in their workplaces.



WORKFORCE TRANSITIONS

450K+ PEOPLE REACHED SINCE 2020

70+ workshops, seminars, and thought leadership convenings delivered

98% OF PARTICIPANTS

feel equipped to take action in support of the mental health and emotional well-being of young employees

"

The Morgan Stanley Alliance for Children's Mental Health is committed to addressing the far-reaching challenges of stress, anxiety and depression for the next generation. Through our partnership with The Steve Fund, we've seen how effective community-based mental health programs can change lives and build a more resilient future for all.

JOAN STEINBERG

CEO, Morgan Stanley Alliance for Children's Mental Health Advisory Board and President, Morgan Stanley Foundation

5 Research that Translates to Action and Helps Shape the Field

Research has consistently been at the core of the Steve Fund's efforts to help students, parents and families, institutional leaders, and behavioral health experts to understand the mental health needs of young people and the interventions suited to support them. The knowledge, understanding, and engagement achieved through our research efforts help build the field of mental health, shape the national conversation, and inform the development of more effective programs and policies.



15 RESEARCH PROJECTS

completed on the state of young people and family mental health nationwide



Our research centers the voices of young people and families from communities often left out of national research and unreached by services, including underserved communities such as first-generation students and professionals, and students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Fund's research focuses on understanding the breadth and root causes of youth mental health concerns and developing and promoting impactful resources and practices to support the mental health and emotional well-being of young people.

5 Research that Translates to Action and Helps Shape the Field, *continued*

Groundbreaking original research from the Steve Fund in 2024–25:

- Through the support of a donor, the Steve Fund commissioned a national survey to better understand the mental health challenges students are encountering today on college campuses. Working with the Harris Poll, we surveyed more than 2,000 students attending four-year colleges and gained insights into mental health challenges faced by students in higher education.

- The Child Mind Institute and the Steve Fund conducted a study exploring mental health challenges for families, including barriers and preferences in accessing care. The findings are guiding improvements in culturally responsive mental health services for children, youth, and parents.

- The Steve Fund catalyzed a research partnership including the UNCF and Healthy Minds Network to assess mental health among students on HBCU campuses. The results offer vital insights to enhance mental health support strategies and outcomes at these institutions.

The Steve Fund translates its research into action through a strategy of robust thought leadership dissemination, community engagement, convenings, briefings, and aligned programming with measurable outcomes.



> **The Steve Fund's first decade laid a compelling foundation built on research, collaboration, and a belief in the promise of every student. The Steve Fund operates in a space where research meets practice, has an impact, and measures outcomes.**
>
> **DR. BYRON D. CLIFT BRELAND**
> Chairman of the Steve Fund Board of Directors

6 Supporting Families on the Front Line

Among the Steve Fund's key programs are efforts that recognize families and caregivers as the first line of mental health support for young people. Our **Family Support Initiative** is a family-centered Community of Action offering knowledge and resources about risk factors, protective factors, networking, information-sharing opportunities, and access to mental health experts. It works to strengthen young people and the scaffolding around them so that they can thrive through the transition to adulthood.



Through psychoeducational workshops, skill-building experiences, awareness campaigns, and research, we have supported families in their critical roles — strengthening resilience and fostering well-being in the young people they care for. Equally important, we help family members to acknowledge risks, recognize warning signs, learn when and how to use protective factors, and access help for their young family members.

By expanding the use of digital resources, we have reached more than 5 million people since establishing the centerpiece of our Family Support Initiative, the "**Family Corner**," in 2022.



5 MILLION
PEOPLE REACHED
through the Steve Fund's
FAMILY CORNER

The Steve Fund

7 Technology and Innovation

To optimize our impact, we undertake ongoing reviews of promising digital tools and strategies, and pioneer culturally responsive virtual supports. As appropriate, we leverage partnerships to mount the most expansive and efficient outreach to our communities.

For example, since 2018, the Steve Fund has partnered with Crisis Text Line. This partnership facilitates text messaging to deliver crisis counseling for young people, especially those from underserved communities. By texting "STEVE" to 741741, young people can connect with a trained crisis counselor to receive well-informed crisis support anytime they need it.

Over the past seven years, this partnership has become a vital lifeline for thousands of young people. Each text conversation reflects an individual reaching out for support, often in moments of isolation, anxiety, depression, or crisis.

> "
>
> **By leveraging digital tools, the Steve Fund is expanding access, deepening engagement, and delivering greater value, while ensuring that the heart of our work, the human relationships and culturally responsive support we provide, remain front and center.**
>
> **EVAN ROSE**
> Co-Founder, Board Chair Emeritus, and Member of Steve Fund Board of Directors

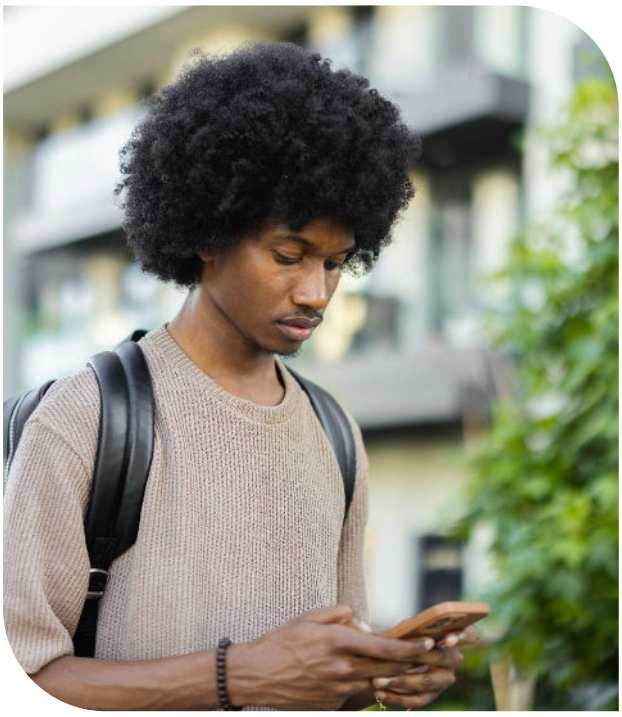
CRISIS TEXT LINE

6k+ Individual users

11K+ Conversations

46 Lives saved

MOST COMMON THEMES:
anxiety/stress, school, depression/sadness



7 Technology and Innovation, *continued*

Through digital-first strategies that are both culturally responsive and evidence-based, the Steve Fund has expanded its engagement with young people around the country.

The "My Digital Sanctuary" platform, co-created for and with young people ages 16–24, translates psychological research on the social strengths that buffer stress and foster well-being into wellness-oriented, culturally resonant language. It offers opportunities for learning and incorporating into a young person's mindset carefully selected protective themes that promote resilience, belonging, and self-efficacy.

Another part of the platform, the #MySafeSpace campaign, supports young people by offering spaces that nurture their mental health and honor their experiences. Young people are invited to watch and share videos and join the campaign.



MY DIGITAL SANCTUARY

3.4M Young people engaged

69% Return visitor rate

250+ User-generated submissions received

> "My Digital Sanctuary takes a fresh approach by speaking to concepts like justice, love, hope, and creativity, and aligning deliberately with a young person's perspective. It represents a shift away from a traditional medical focus to a more inclusive, spiritual, cultural, and artistic approach.
>
> **DR. ANNELLE PRIMM**
> Senior Medical Director of The Steve Fund

8 Building the Mental Health Field by Leading Outreach and Engagement

The Steve Fund has hosted many convenings and delivered dozens of national conference presentations over the past decade, helping to build capacity and shape the national dialogue among students, faculty, staff, campus leaders, and experts on student mental health. In addition to our flagship Young, Gifted, and Resilient campus conferences, we partnered with Georgetown University's president to organize a first-time convening that engaged college and university C-suite leaders in direct discussion with highly respected experts on the mental health of students from under-resourced communities. The goal was to build solutions to understand and better address these students' unmet mental health needs.

Shortly after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steve Fund established a national Crisis Response Task Force comprised of key stakeholders and leaders from across sectors, regions, and backgrounds — students, mental health experts, senior executives from corporations, colleges, and universities, philanthropy, and non-profits. The goal was to anticipate needs resulting from the pandemic and help direct resources to young people from under-resourced populations.

> "**During the pandemic and societal disruption, the Steve Fund showed tremendous flexibility and ability to respond rapidly when it convened a crisis response task force and published a timely, authoritative, and action-oriented report, *Adapting and Innovating to Promote Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being for Young People.***
>
> **DR. BYRON D. CLIFT BRELAND**
> Chairman of the Steve Fund Board of Directors

50+ **NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

by Steve Fund mental health experts delivered over the past decade, shaping the national dialogue on student mental health

8 Building the Mental Health Field by Leading Outreach and Engagement, *continued*

By the fall of 2020, the Task Force produced a forward-looking report, providing insightful recommendations for action on how to mitigate the perilous mental health risks caused by the health, economic, and social crises of that period, and promote the mental health and emotional well-being of students, particularly those from underserved and under-resourced communities. It was the springboard for a broadly effective dissemination and engagement campaign with key stakeholders across sectors and laid the groundwork for resulting partnerships and programs to the present day.

The Steve Fund was tapped by the California Endowment to take a leading role as co-designer and lead mental health expert for the Youth Mental Wellness Now! summit in June 2022. This summit brought together young people to share their voices and ideas directly with U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy as he developed his national platform on youth mental health, resulting in a major new thrust in this field by the federal government.



9 HBCU Initiative: Strengthening Mental Health Infrastructure

In our ongoing effort to support students and help them reach their full potential, the Steve Fund established an initiative designed to address the unique mental health needs of students at HBCUs.

The HBCU Initiative draws on our higher education and mental health expertise and mobilizes partnerships to better understand and meet the needs of students through collaborations with the UNCF as well as individual campuses. This robust initiative includes research, programs, conferences, and student-centered direct engagements.

In collaboration with UNCF and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, we developed a national campaign culminating in two conferences centering student voices on mental health on HBCU campuses.

In addition to its work on behalf of students, the initiative engages and implements support for faculty and staff. Our work is guided by The Steve Fund HBCU Mental Health Council, composed of mental health experts affiliated with HBCUs who work with our team to prioritize the most critical mental health issues affecting HBCU students.

10 Mental Health and Persistence Initiative

Growing from ten years of intimate work with college students, faculty, leaders and campuses, the Steve Fund recently launched its Mental Health and Persistence Initiative, which is centered on two complementary strategies to boost persistence. The first is creation of a highly interactive, cohort-based peer community designed for first-generation students, focusing on carefully selected wellness themes.

The second integrates into extant college curricula and programs, Steve Fund expert-led mental health workshops, seminars, and modular courses designed to enhance student persistence. This new initiative delivers an incisive focus on increasing college persistence through best practice mental health strategies and resources.

Our Team of Expert Mental Health Advisors

Since the early days of the Steve Fund, we have prioritized the development of a first-rate team of mental health experts, including national leaders in psychology, psychiatry, research, college counseling, and culturally responsive mental health support. This distinguished group is essential to ensuring that our work remains grounded in rigorous evidence, emerging innovations, and an unwavering commitment to equity.

Our cadre of mental health experts bring deep experience from academic, clinical, research, and community settings, and they engage closely with staff and key stakeholders to strengthen our programs. Their informed perspectives on the social drivers of health and the evolving needs of young people and families continue to be one of our most valuable assets in our pursuit of the mission, bringing extensive experience as leaders in the field.



“

Our diverse network of expert advisors guide the Steve Fund’s direction and strengthen our support for young people and their families, especially those from underserved and resource-limited communities.

Their wisdom is an important compass for the Steve Fund as we chart our direction into the future.

DR. ANNELLE PRIMM

Senior Medical Director of The Steve Fund

The Next Decade: Scaling Bold Solutions



> **There's a risk that young people may feel hopeless about the situation with uncertainty and fear about the direction the country is going and despair in under-resourced communities, civil rights rollbacks, violence, and anxiety about a changing climate. That's why the Steve Fund's risk and protective factors work is so important, along with equipping youth and communities with resilience strategies.**

DR. ANNELLE PRIMM
Senior Medical Director of The Steve Fund

Meeting the Moment

We are facing an important moment for youth mental health.

The timing is critical: schools, families, nonprofits, and communities face deep cuts in resources and sustained high need for services and supports. Important systems that young people and families have long counted on are being dismantled and defunded. Intense pressures are being placed upon our nation's most underserved and under-resourced young people and families.

The Steve Fund is meeting this moment with focus and resolve. Building on 10 years of experience, evidence, and partnerships, we are scaling solutions that are youth-guided, culturally responsive, and designed with families at the table. Evaluations from students show measurable gains in mental health knowledge—key indicators of improved mental health literacy. Our approach, grounded in rigorous research, expert guidance, youth co-design, and deep community engagement, positions us to strengthen these outcomes over the decade ahead.

We continue to evaluate, adapt, and incorporate technology advances appropriately, including AI, to expand access, reduce barriers, enhance engagement, and deepen the impact of evidence-based, culturally grounded solutions in order to reach underserved students and families currently outside the mental health ecosystem. We view technology not as a replacement for human connection or care, but as a tool to expand access, personalization, and cultural resonance in mental health support, particularly for under-resourced communities that are often overlooked in research and practice.

The Next Decade: Scaling Bold Solutions, *continued*

The Steve Fund is also focusing on enhancing ***protective factors*** to mitigate the risks to mental health and emotional well-being that young people may face. Some key risk factors experienced by students include loneliness, lack of belonging, and isolation; grief and loss, and financial stress in their households.

We are doubling down on promoting the protective factors that counter these risks by helping young people, their families, and educators:

- Learn how to effectively cope with stress and negative experiences
- Build supportive peer, community, and campus relationships
- Identify and secure mental health services
- Access restorative and fulfilling resources such as nature, creativity, and rest, among other strategies.

> **The work of the Steve Fund matters now more than ever, given the current climate: helping communities be able to thrive, strengthening young people's resilience and their ability to emotionally self-regulate, communicate, take care of themselves, and stay connected with others. The same thing applies to families. That's work that will help to improve our society as a whole.**
>
> **DR. GINA DUNCAN**
> Mental Health Expert Advisor to The Steve Fund

Vision 2025–2035

The Steve Fund envisions a future where every young person is fully supported by peers, families, communities, and institutional cultures that value and contribute to their mental health and emotional well-being. We aim to foster the mental well-being of young people, especially those from underserved and under-resourced communities, equipping them with practical tools for resilience and promoting their lifelong thriving and achievement of healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives.

Acknowledgements

The Steve Fund Board of Directors

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