



Education
Strategy
Group

State Guide to Effective Use of AI in College and Career Advising Systems

October 2026

About This Playbook

WHO IT'S FOR

This playbook is designed for state education leaders across K–12 and higher education agencies, and for the policymakers and funders who shape how new AI tools reach schools and students.

WHAT IT COVERS

The playbook looks at AI advising through a systems lens. It covers how advising is changing with AI, how leading states and platforms are using AI, the conditions that determine whether AI strengthens or fragments advising, and the policy and investment levers states and funders should use to maximize its safety and effectiveness.

WHY NOW

AI is already shaping how students think about their futures, and they are often turning to it outside of the existing advising infrastructure. AI's formal role in college and career advising, however, is still taking shape. Federal guidance has named AI-enabled advising as a priority, but state AI policy has focused mostly on instruction and compliance and left advising largely unaddressed. That gap is a window: before AI in advising is defined by vendor offerings and local purchasing decisions, states can set clear expectations for how it serves students, families, and educators.

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State Leadership Is Necessary to Ensure AI Use in Advising Scales Opportunity

The decision about what comes after high school is one of the most consequential a young person will make.

AI tools are optimized to be agreeable. They don't push back. They don't know a student's family, their financial situation, or what they actually care about. In a high-stakes decision context, that is a serious limitation and risk.

WHEN THE SYSTEM ISN'T READY

AI guides students toward the wrong pathways with real consequences for their education, finances, and families. Risks compound when systems are fragmented and AI operates with decontextualized data.

→ *Advising that reinforces inequity, not opportunity.*

WHEN THE SYSTEM IS DESIGNED WELL

AI constrained by clear boundaries and narrowly embedded within well-designed systems can support better student decision-making and expand socioeconomic mobility.

→ *Advising that scales opportunity and coherence.*

Before focusing on how to integrate AI into advising, states and districts must first determine whether and where it should be used at all.

What This Playbook Encourages for States

AI has real potential in advising: reaching more students, surfacing information counselors don't have time to find, and reducing administrative burden. Whether that potential is realized is less about the tool itself and more about system organization, data infrastructure, and implementation capacity.

POLICIES FOR STATES TO PRIORITIZE

System Alignment & Coherence

1

A clear statewide advising model. AI mapped to ILP/ACP frameworks. Aligned and sustained funding to support advising investments.

Adult Capacity & Role Clarity

2

Educators trained to interpret and refine AI outputs. Clear definition of what stays human-led. Prompting expertise built into ongoing professional learning for advisors.

Technology & Data Infrastructure

3

AI connected to state-specific labor market and credential data. Embedded in existing platforms, not layered on top. Without this, AI defaults to national averages that don't reflect local opportunity or it presents inaccuracies.

PRACTICES FOR STATES TO PRIORITIZE

1 Define the Problem Before Determining the Solution

AI adoption framed as a solution to counselor ratios risks 'solutionitis.' Ground every implementation decision in a specific, named advising problem.

2 Invest in Practitioner Training and Support

AI makes human expertise more important, not less. Train advisors to interpret and refine AI outputs within a human-in-the-loop model that builds trust and effectiveness.

3 Keep Students Safe and Relationships at the Center

Advising is relational. AI tools optimized to be agreeable create real risks in high-stakes decisions. Design and guide policy around pro-social tools.

4 Use AI to Bring Families Into the Advising Process

Families are the most trusted voice in students' postsecondary decisions. Use AI tools to support increased family engagement in postsecondary planning.

5 Train and Test AI Tools Before Deploying Them

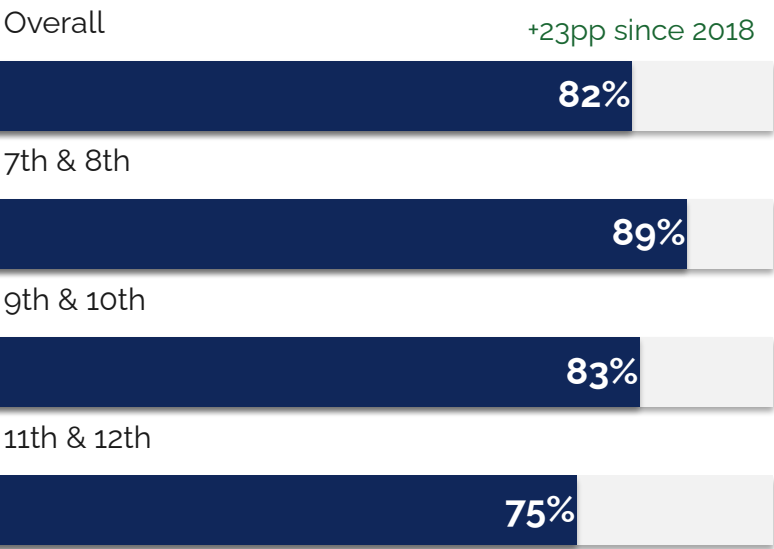
AI is only as good as the context it's trained on. Default outputs are generic. States must require alignment to local frameworks, data, and advising practice before any tool goes to scale.

Summary of National Landscape | AI Advising Trends

Student Confidence and Access Have Grown Significantly

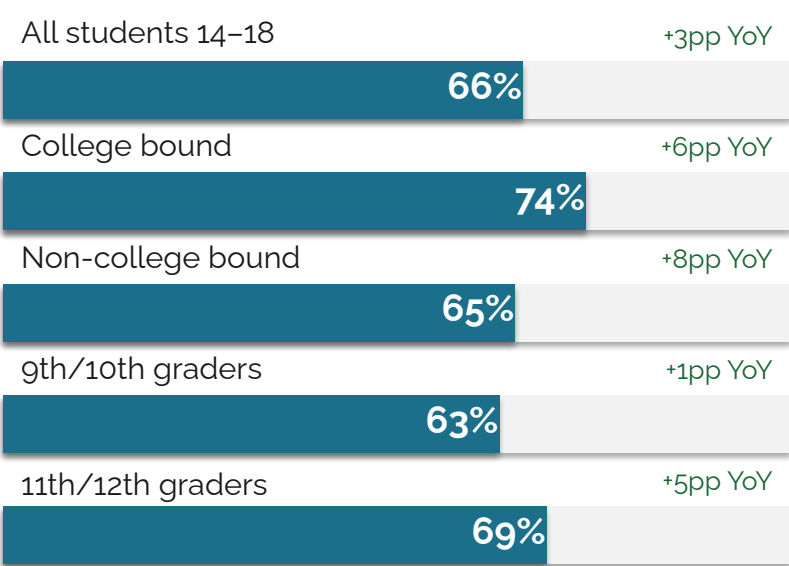
Three national surveys document meaningful gains in school support for postsecondary planning and in students' confidence about their next steps.

MY SCHOOL PROVIDES ME WITH THE RIGHT RESOURCES TO PLAN FOR MY NEXT STEPS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



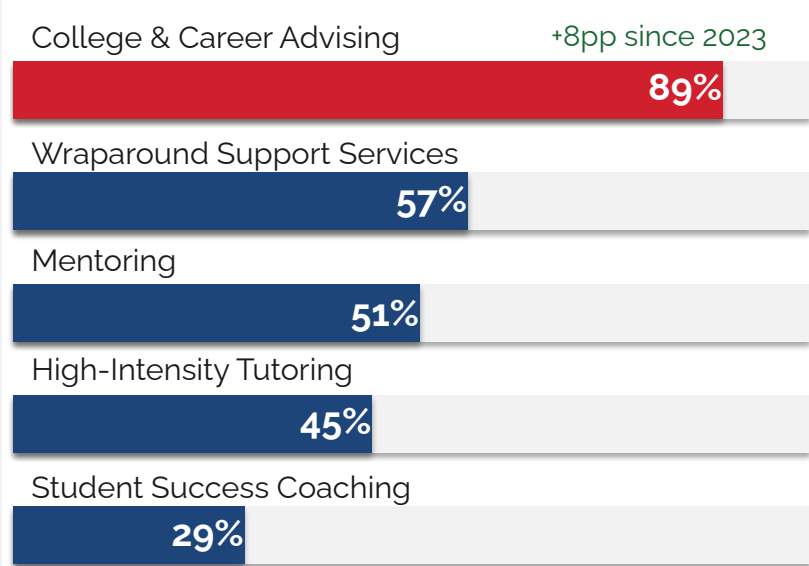
Source: [Britebound Teen Next Steps Survey](#) (n=3,057)

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT YOU KNOW THE NEXT STEPS NEEDED TO TRANSITION INTO A CAREER



Source: [College Board Career Survey](#) (n=1,252)

WHAT OF THE FOLLOWING STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DOES YOUR SCHOOL PROVIDE?



Source: [Everyone Graduates Center / Johns Hopkins](#) (n=7,500)

More Students Have Access, Yet the System is Still Fragmented

Access to advising has grown significantly, but the system remains fragmented across who delivers it, how it is delivered, and what type of support students receive.

82%

Students say school provides right resources to plan next steps (up 23% from 2018)

89%

High school leaders report offering college & career advising (up 8% from 2022-2023)

69%

of 11th & 12th graders "very confident" or "somewhat confident" about the steps they need to take to transition into a career (up 5% between 2023 & 2024)

⊕ TYPE

Relational (social capital, cultural competency) vs. **Procedural** (financial literacy, navigation, application processes)

⦿ PEOPLE

Counselors, CBOs, school staff, CTE teachers, administrators, & state funded advisors ([TN](#) & [MS](#))

▶ DELIVERY

Platforms, 1:1 advising, advisory periods, events, community programs

Parents, Counselors, & Advisors Are Skeptical Of AI

Most parents do not know their school's AI policies, and most counselors and teachers have not received AI-specific training.

PARENTS

~6 in 10 Parents say it is better for students to use AI than not

Only 41% Believe AI will improve their child's learning outcomes

83% Parents don't know their school's AI policies

SCHOOL COUNSELORS & TEACHERS

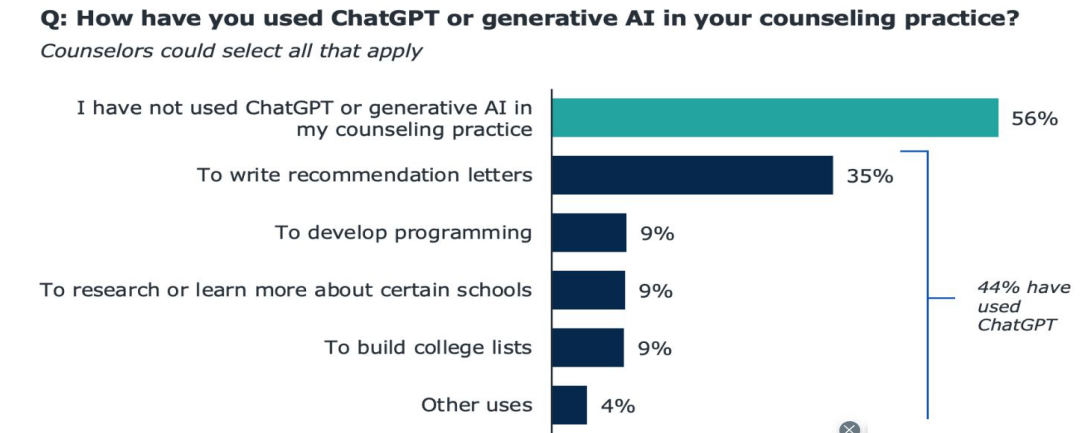
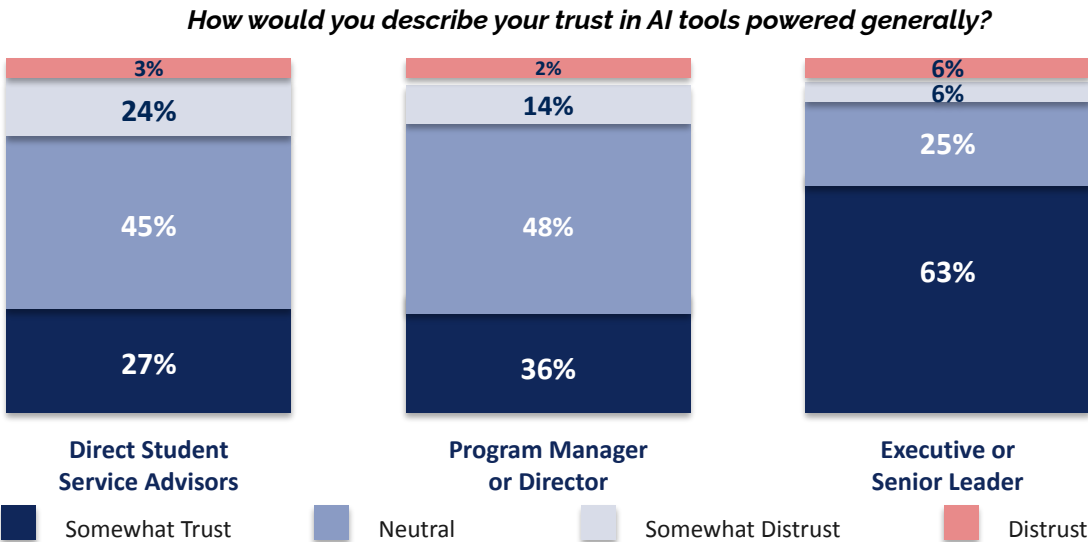
56% of counselors report NOT using AI in their counseling practice

Most common use Writing recommendation letters, not direct student support

<40% View AI as a tool to provide services directly to students

68% of teachers have NOT participated in AI-related training from their school

Sources: [EAB Counselor Survey](#) [RAND AI in Education Survey 2025](#)



Sources: [EAB Survey](#) & [NCAN Member Survey](#)

AI Is Entering a System Not Designed for Coherence

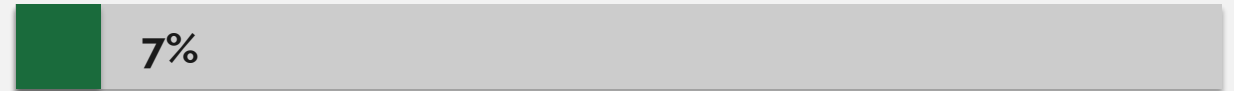
AI promises to solve real problems in advising but only 7% of districts are currently using it for CCR advising.

What AI Promises to Address

- Scale personalization beyond counselor capacity
- Make sense of complex labor market & pathway information
- Provide real-time, on-demand decision support
- Reduce administrative burden on counselors
- Expand access in multiple languages, outside school hours

SUPERINTENDENT AI ADOPTION

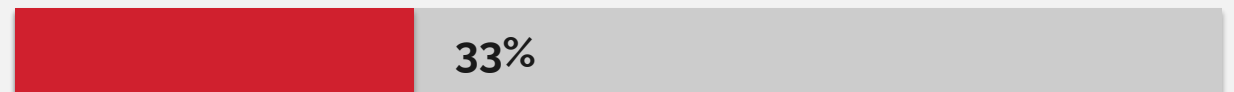
Currently using AI for CCR advising



Interested but not yet using



No interest in AI for advising



Source: [American School District Panel](#)

AI Usage Is Rising On Discrete Tasks But Trust Remains Low

Students are using AI tools more frequently in college search, but very few are using AI advising tools or ranking it as a trusted resource.

~50%

Students using AI tools during college search (up from **26%** Spring 2025)

39%

Students saying AI has prompted them to consider alternatives to college

61%

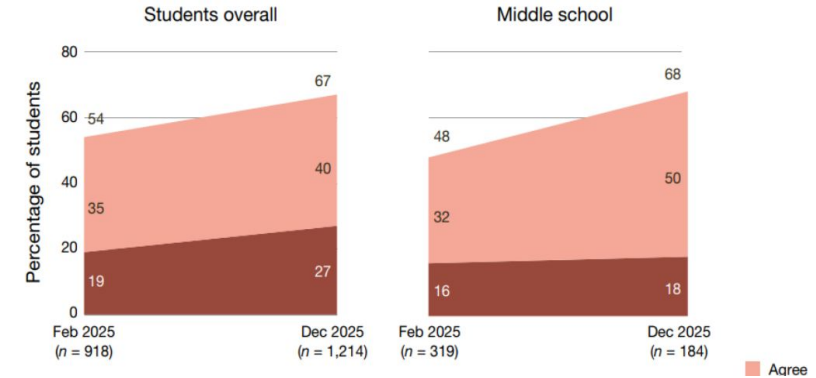
Students using AI chatbots, with ChatGPT as the most common

Only 2%

Students using **dedicated** AI advising tools

Source: [RAND Student AI Usage Survey](#) / [EAB](#)

Students Increasingly Agreed That Using AI for Schoolwork Harms Critical Thinking Skills



Gen Zers' Feelings About AI Have Worsened Over Past Year

Artificial intelligence makes me ...

% Strongly agree/Agree



Source: [Gen Z Walton Survey](#)

Summary of National Landscape | Ensuring High-Quality Advising with AI

The Role of AI in Supporting Students Exists on a Spectrum

Some states have adopted guidance policies that distinguish between AI-assisted support, AI collaboration, and more independent forms of AI use.

Level	AI Role	What AI Does
Level 1	No AI Assistance	No AI tools are used at any point. Students rely solely on their knowledge and skills
Level 2	AI Assisted Brainstorming	AI tools can help generate ideas. Final content must be created by the student without direct AI input. AI assistance must be cited.
Level 3	AI Supported Drafting	AI can help with drafting initial versions. The final version must be significantly revised by the student. Clear distinction between AI input and student's contributions
Level 4	AI Collaborative Creation	AI-generated content can be included. Student must critically evaluate and edit AI contributions. AI usage must be transparent and cited.
Level 5	AI as Co-Creator	Extensive use of AI in content creation. Student provides a rationale for AI use and ensures original thought. Work adheres to academic integrity with proper citations.

Source: [State of Washington 5 Step Scaffolding Scale for Students](#)

Use of AI in Advising Must Be Grounded in What It Means to Deliver High-Quality Advising



STUDENTS DESERVE A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

that recognizes their dreams, helps them develop aspirations, and ensures that ALL students have the advising relationships and experiences needed to explore and pursue those aspirations.



HIGH QUALITY POSTSECONDARY ADVISING HAPPENS WHEN STUDENTS RECEIVE:

EXPERIENCES IN GRADES 9-12 that allow them to explore a range of postsecondary options, as well as the jobs and workplaces that they might be interested in, throughout their time in high school. *This might look like:*

- Participating in work-based learning experiences in a variety of classes
- Engaging in community service, job shadows, or internships during the school day, after school or in the summer
- Learning from professionals at career panels, fairs or through interviews
- Visiting a range of college campuses, industry sites, and apprenticeship training spaces

WELL-INFORMED ACADEMIC GUIDANCE ABOUT THE MILESTONES they need to reach throughout their high school career in order to access various paths. *This might look like:*

- Regular review of students' transcripts and resume-building experiences with a trained adult
- Examination of admissions criteria at a variety of postsecondary destinations
- Support for identifying and enrolling in appropriate dual credit opportunities
- Support with registering and preparing for required testing for college, certification, and apprenticeships

OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT ON EVOLVING ACADEMIC AND CAREER IDENTITY throughout high school, alongside other students and with caring adults who value their culture and who know them well. *This might look like:*

- Assessment tools that provide insight into personal talents and strengths
- Conversations with peers in advisory or similar classes, school activities, or affinity groups
- Regular and culturally relevant individual and family meetings with trained counselors, teachers, or other trusted school adults
- Alumni panels or inter-grade mentoring

PROACTIVE AND CONCRETE APPLICATION SUPPORT from trained experts and trusted adults, in collaboration with their family, in taking all of the steps necessary to apply and enroll in the destination they choose. *This might look like:*

- Creating a targeted list of good-fit postsecondary destinations that reflects varying levels of selectivity
- Identifying and tracking completion of all needed steps for the path students choose
- Understanding the financial implications of postsecondary choices and accessing state and federal support to manage costs

KNOWLEDGEABLE PATHWAY ADVICE that will help them explore and match their interests and talents to good fit postsecondary destinations. *This might look like:*

- Conversations in a range of classes about career pathways related to those subjects
- Interest and career inventories followed by individual reflection and research on career outlooks, salary range, and needed education
- Opportunities to talk with trusted adults inside and outside of school about their chosen pathway and associated costs and benefits
- Chances for families to interact with school staff and to gain knowledge about postsecondary pathways

PRACTICE BUILDING AND USING NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS that will equip them to manage the postsecondary planning process and steer through new institutions and situations once they leave high school. *This might look like:*

- Developing and leveraging social networks
- Establishing strong organizational habits
- Identifying obstacles and leveraging the appropriate resources to overcome them
- Cultivating a growth mindset

CARA's high quality advising [framework](#) articulates the multiple components necessary to ensure all students receive effective college and career support in high school.

Where AI Fits and Where It Doesn't in High-Quality Advising

To evaluate different use cases of AI advising, CARA's high quality advising [framework](#) can serve as a blueprint for states and policymakers.

CARA Dimension	Framework Examples	AI Role	What AI Can Do ✓ vs. What Must Stay Human ✗
Proactive Application Support	FAFSA, college apps, enrollment steps, deadline reminders	HIGH	✓ Reminders, FAFSA nudges, deadline tracking, answering procedural Q&A ✗ Final decisions, financial conversations, pathway trade-off discussions
Well-Informed Milestone Guidance	Transcript review, course alignment, dual credit planning	MODERATE	✓ Surfacing course options, milestone checklists, dual credit info ✗ Interpreting transcripts in context; localized milestone knowledge
Knowledgeable Pathway Advice	Career exploration, college matching, local labor market data	MODERATE	✓ Career interest tools, labor market data, college list generation ✗ Validating match quality, overriding biased outputs, family conversations
Experiences Exploring Options	Job shadows, campus visits, career fairs, internships	LOWER	✓ Surfacing WBL opportunities, connecting students to programs ✗ Relationship-building and aspiration exploration
Reflection on Career Identity	Cultural identity, aspiration-building, values clarification	VERY LIMITED	✓ Interest inventories, structured reflection prompts ✗ All relational work, peer and alumni networking
Building Navigational Skills	Managing transitions, social capital, overcoming obstacles	VERY LIMITED	✓ Reminders and progress check-ins ✗ Social capital development, mentoring, trust-based guidance

Summary of National Landscape | States & Platforms

Federal Direction Exists, But State AI Advising Policy Is Mostly Absent

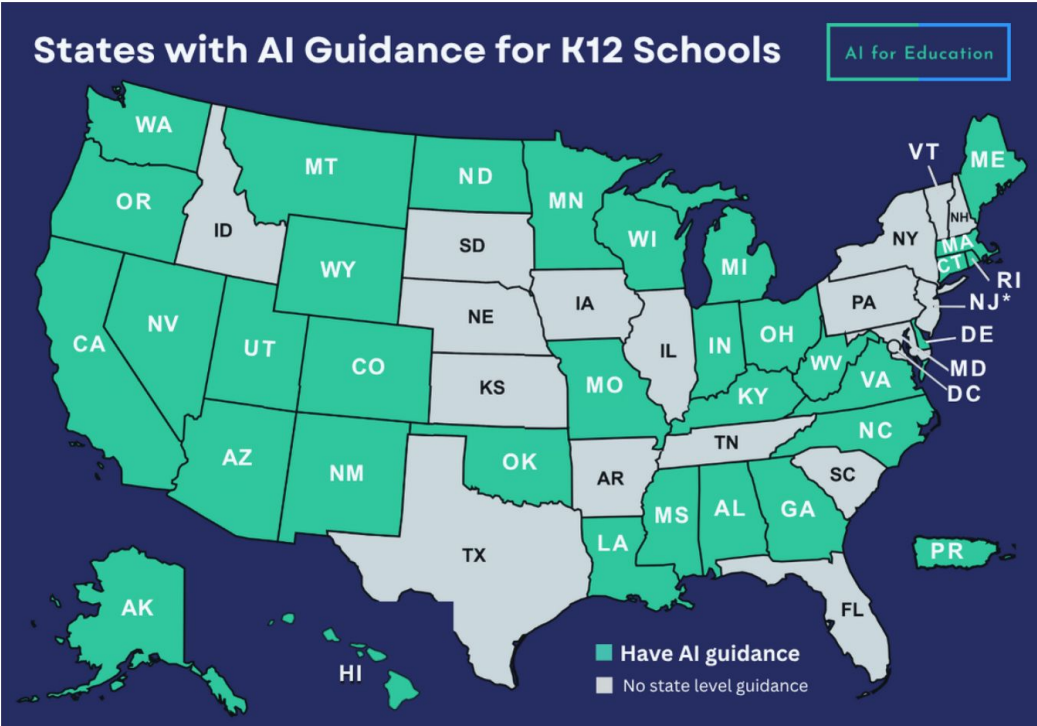
FEDERAL DIRECTION

- ✓ Apr 2025 [Executive Order](#): AI literacy & workforce readiness framework
- ✓ Jul 2025 [Dear Colleague Letter](#): explicitly named AI for CCR advising as priority
- ✓ Expanded allowable uses of federal funds for AI activities
- ✓ Recent guidance prioritizes AI adoption over guardrails

STATE ACTIVITY

- ✓ **134** AI education [bills](#) across 31 states (2026); focused on privacy, not advising
- ✓ **34** states have [issued](#) formal AI guidance; almost none covers advising
- ✓ [Oklahoma](#) & [Maryland](#): bills limiting AI in high-stakes decisions
- ✓ [Rhode Island](#): explicitly includes AI for personalized career recommendations

The federal government has named AI for CCR advising as a priority. However, most states have not issued AI guidance focused on advising.



Source: [AI for Education](#)

Platforms Are Moving Faster Than Policy

Three types of actors are driving AI adoption in advising, each with different reach, depth, and connection to state systems.

STATE PLATFORMS

- ✓ Texas MyTexasFuture + [ADVi](#): text chatbot, now in state budget
- ✓ Washington [Otterbot](#): text nudges for FAFSA & state scholarships
- ✓ Washington [CampusEvolve](#) Pathways AI: co-developed with districts using verified state data

CCR PLATFORMS

- ✓ [Naviance PowerBuddy](#): conversational LLM for college search & list-building
- ✓ [SchoolLinks](#): agentic AI embedded in counselor workflows (launching Fall 2026)
- ✓ [Scoir Admission Intelligence](#): predictive analytics for college list strategy

INTERMEDIARIES & NONPROFITS

- ✓ College Possible '[Coach Possible](#)': 24/7 AI + integration w/curriculum & CommonApp
- ✓ Urban Assembly [CounselorGPT](#): integration of labor-market and higher ed data to help postsecondary decisions
- ✓ [Hybrid Advising Co-op](#): chatbot nudges, focused on financial aid and other milestones

AI in Advising: Sample Provider Landscape (1 of 2)

AI models, use cases, and system alignment across state platforms and CCR platforms.

Category	Provider	AI Approach	Core Use Case	System Alignment
State	Texas - ADVi	Hybrid / Gen AI + Tool-Augmented	Text-based advising for college planning milestones, financial aid, re-enrollment support	Moderate - High: Connected to statewide data systems and application platforms; ongoing training on local/state systems by virtual advisors
State	Washington - Otterbot	Hybrid / Baseline AI + Tool-Augmented	SMS nudges and Q&A for FAFSA, dual credit, deadlines	Moderate: Aligned to state priorities and initiatives
State	Washington - CampusEvolve	Agentic AI	Personalized pathway guidance using verified WA-specific education and career data	High: Co-developed with state agencies, districts, and intermediaries
CCR Platform	Naviance - PowerBuddy	Gen AI	Personalized college matching, list-building, career exploration, real-time Q&A	Low-Moderate: Embedded in platform but separate from counselor workflows
CCR Platform	Scoir - Admission Intelligence	Tool-Augmented	Admissions predictions, balanced college lists, application strategy simulation	Moderate: Integrated into platform; counselors define reach/likely/match tiers

* AI model classifications based on publicly available product descriptions. (continued on next slide)

AI in Advising: Sample Provider Landscape (2 of 2)

AI models, use cases, and system alignment across CCR platforms and intermediary/college access organizations.

Category	Provider	AI Approach	Core Use Case	System Alignment
CCR Platform	SchoolLinks	Agentic AI	Task-specific agents for planning, tracking, communication, counselor workflows	Moderate-High: Designed to integrate with district systems and state/national data sets
Intermediary	Hybrid Advising Co-Op	Hybrid / Gen AI + Tool-Augmented	Financial aid guidance, application reminders, answering common advising questions via SMS/chat	Low: Operates outside school systems and data infrastructure
Intermediary	College Possible - Coach Possible	Hybrid / Gen AI + Tool-Augmented	Financial aid guidance, key milestone reinforcement & integration with Co-Pilot SIS	Moderate: Uses student records; not connected to state/district advising workflows
Intermediary	Urban Assembly - CounselorGPT	Hybrid / Tool-Augmented & Agentic	Advising aligned to academic progress, postsecondary planning, & school-based data systems	Moderate-High: Integrated in/out of school; uses labor-market data and structured school onboarding

Early Impact Is Promising, But Rigorous Causal Evidence Remains Rare

Most available evidence comes from organizational reports. Only **13%** of AI education research is causal. Early impact data is **mostly** limited to advising “output” data or “process-based” (vs. mastery-based) leading indicators.

Provider	Research Context	Key Finding
Otterbot (Washington)	Self-reports from WSAC org data ; MDRC messaging study	86%+ graduation & 60%+ FAFSA completion among students asking 5+ questions
ADVi (Texas)	Greater Texas Foundation impact report	Reduced routine Q&A time → counselors have more capacity for personalized support
CounselorGPT (Urban Assembly)	Organizational impact report	~20 min/week per student → 600+ cumulative advising hours in just 8 weeks
Grace (College Advising Corps)	Organizational impact report	22% higher FAFSA, 18% more applications, 17% more advisor meetings vs. control; 12% higher 2-yr enrollment
Blu (Bottom Line)	Organizational impact report	Saved advisors ~112 hours in a single year

Emerging Pro-Social Tools Show What States Can Push For

New research shows AI advising tools can be designed to strengthen students' human connections rather than replace them.

THE RESEARCH

Prosocial Possibilities

Julia Freeland Fisher & Anna Arsenault
Christensen Institute

Without intentional design, AI can replace the advisors and mentors students turn to, make asking for help feel unnecessary, and narrow the networks that lead to opportunities.

The team worked with 10 platforms serving students from K–12 into the workforce to design and test new features. Prosocial tools, they write, “make it easier to find, reach, and rely on others.”

Six design principles the pilots built on:

1. Align to identities & goals
2. Broker new connections
3. Deepen support networks
4. Build networking skills & confidence
5. Cultivate pro-social mindsets
6. Generate relationship data

EARLY PILOT RESULTS

92%

REACH Pathways

of participants reported more confidence reaching out to someone in their network after a social capital “quest”

75%

Overgrad

of students preferred counselor-brokered introductions to alumni over cold outreach

100%

Uprooted Academy

of students' support-network members identified how they could help within 48 hours of a text prompt

+6.7 pts

Roadtrip Nation

in students' self-reported confidence booking a career conversation after AI-simulated practice

WHAT STATES CAN DO

Ask for relationship data

Ask vendors to report how often tools connect students to counselors, alumni, and mentors, not just usage and milestones.

Prioritize brokering

Favor tools that make warm introductions to alumni, employers, and mentors over tools that only coach students on outreach.

Pair tools with real relationships

Connect AI tools to work-based learning, alumni networks, and advisory programs rather than deploying them on their own.

The opportunity: Promising tools are emerging. States can help them grow by building demand for AI that strengthens students' relationships instead of standing in for them.

Source: Freeland Fisher & Arsenault, [Prosocial Possibilities](#), Christensen Institute, 2026.

Policies for States to Prioritize

Three Conditions Determine Whether AI Helps In Advising

How AI is procured, governed, and implemented matters more than which tool a state or district chooses. Every procurement decision is also a policy decision. These decisions shape whether AI reinforces existing advising systems or adds another disconnected layer.

Condition	What It Requires	Why It Matters
1 System Alignment & Coherence	- Establish AI advising evaluation frameworks (MD) - Map AI procurement and contracting processes to ILP/ACP frameworks and graduation requirements - Clarify which advising functions AI should/should not support - Embed AI into existing advising funding streams	Without alignment, AI tools produce shallow, disconnected, or developmentally inappropriate guidance. AI tools may prompt students to make complex postsecondary decisions precipitously, such as comparing colleges before engaging in foundational career exploration or program of study selection
2 Adult Capacity & Role Definition	- Define in state guidance which advising roles should use AI and in what manner - Build AI competencies into advisor credentials and licensure - Update counselor and school leader preparation program standards to incorporate AI	Without clear role definition, AI adds complexity rather than reducing it. Adults and students need prompting expertise and ability to evaluate AI outputs for accuracy and bias.
3 Technology & Data Infrastructure	- Connect AI to state/local labor market data - Require integration with existing platforms - Prioritize interoperability over standalone tools in procurement processes - Ensure state websites, frameworks, and advising data are structured for AI discovery by frontier models.	Without state-specific data, AI defaults to national averages that don't reflect local labor markets. Equity concerns are closely tied to these infrastructure gaps. 46% of responses from frontier AI models contained significant or critical accuracy issues responding to education and workforce data (<i>Urban Institute</i>)

Practices for States to Prioritize

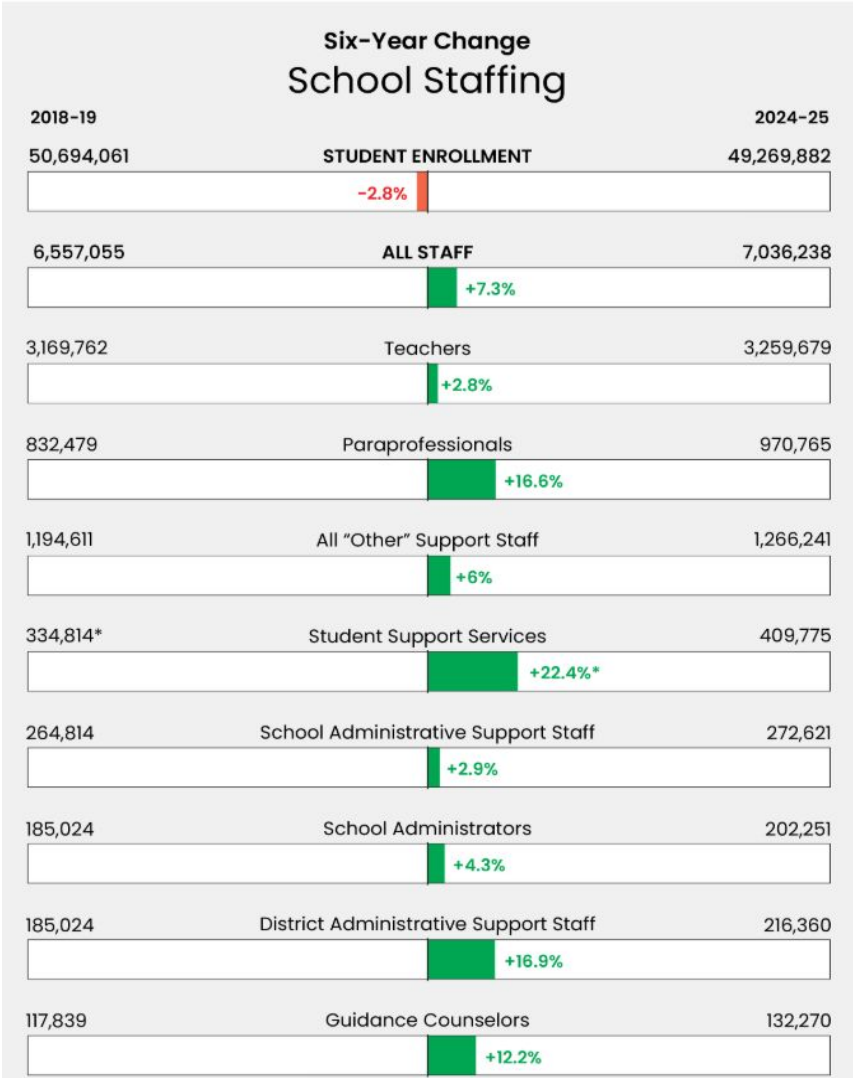
Recommendations for States

- 1 Start with Clearly Defined Advising Problems, Not AI Solutions
- 2 Invest in Practitioner Training and Support
- 3 Center Student Safety and Relationships in AI Design
- 4 Leverage AI to Strengthen Family Engagement in Advising
- 5 Train and Test AI Advising Tools for Context and Quality

Start with Clearly Defined Advising Problems, Not AI Solutions

Framing AI primarily as a solution to counselor ratios, or advising frequency, risks "solutionitis." ASCA [data](#) now shows high school ratios of **195–224:1**, meeting the recommended ratio for the first time. States must anchor AI strategy in specific, defined problems.

State Action	What This Looks Like
Require problem definition prior to adoption	Districts identify the advising problem AI is intended to address before procurement. Use the NYC Enterprise Request Management process as a model.
Convene cross-role stakeholders closest to the work	Bring together students, families, counselors, CBOs, and administrators to identify and validate shared advising challenges before selecting or deploying any tool.
Establish continuous feedback and co-design processes	Move beyond one-time input and require ongoing testing and refinement. States that embed co-design structures are better positioned to scale and sustain innovation over time.
Differentiate guidance based on district context	Advising systems vary widely across urban, suburban, & rural settings. State guidance should reflect these differences & tailor implementation support to local capacity and conditions.



Source: [The 74](#)

Invest in Practitioner Training and Support

AI makes human capacity more critical than ever. AI advising works best in a human-in-the-loop model, where trained advisors interpret, question, and refine what AI produces. Investing in practitioners reduces complexity, builds trust in AI tools, and ultimately makes them more effective.

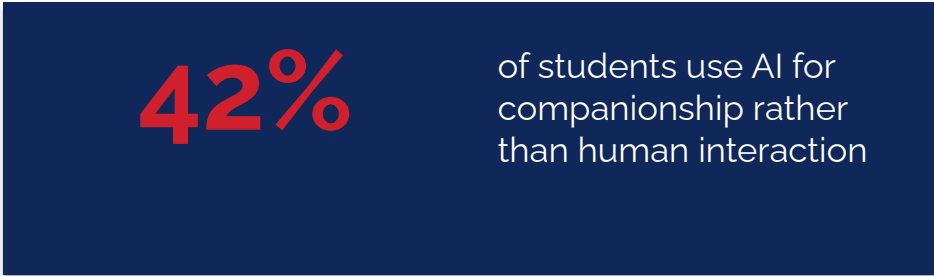
State Action	What This Looks Like
Make human-in-the-loop the default	Define which advising functions AI supports and where advisors review, interpret, or make the final call, so roles are clear and AI fits into existing work rather than adding to it.
Develop interpretation and prompting skills	Train advisors to assess AI outputs for accuracy, bias, and fit, and to supply the context that makes those outputs useful. NC's guidance on prompting and reducing hallucinations offers a model.
Embed AI into existing advisor professional development and networks	Build AI into state advising academies, credentials, and professional learning rather than standalone, optional trainings. MA and CT are building statewide AI training efforts.
Close gaps in access to training	Prioritize urban, rural, and higher-poverty districts, which are less likely to offer AI training, and update counselor and school leader preparation programs.

Urban Assembly paired its CounselorGPT rollout with onboarding, role-based access, and ongoing coaching. Where those supports were more consistent, usage increased.

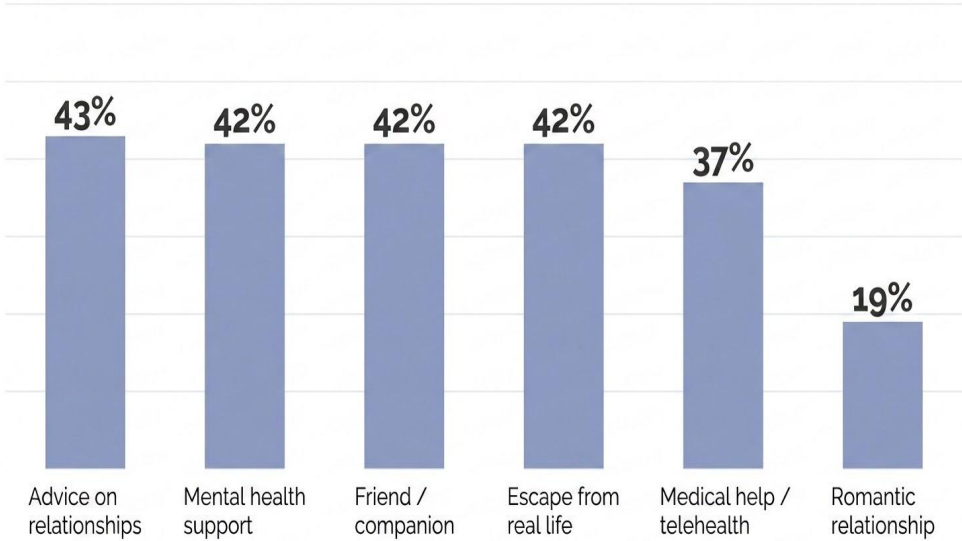
Center Student Safety and Relationships in AI Design

Advising is inherently relational. Conversational AI tools are optimized to be affirming and overly agreeable, creating unique risks in the advising context.

State Action	What This Looks Like
Require human oversight in reflective interactions	Establish that AI supports, but does not replace human judgment. National guidance emphasizes counseling tools should be supplemental with clear escalation to human professionals.
Define appropriate and inappropriate use cases	Restrict tools that simulate relationships or provide emotional support without escalation pathways. See California's guidance .
Set design expectations reinforcing human relationships	Curate and approve tools like Axio & Uprooted Academy that connect students to existing support networks rather than deepening AI reliance.. Establish preferred vendor lists (NC)
Monitor AI's impact on student relationships	Incorporate measures of AI use and student relationship quality in statewide climate surveys . Early evidence: increased AI use correlates with weaker student-teacher connections.



Non-Academic Uses of AI Reported by Students

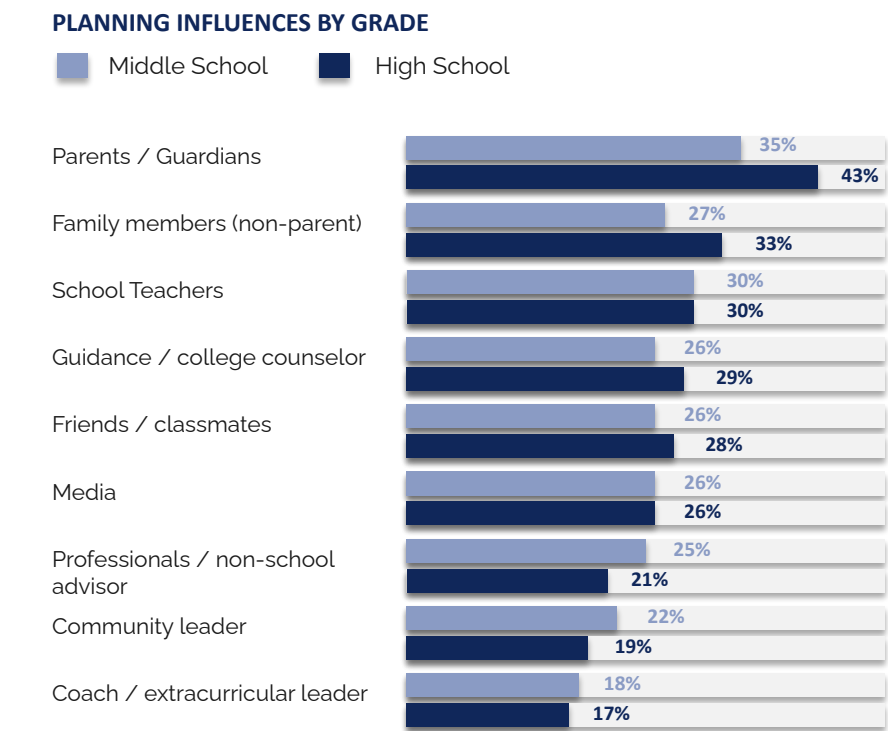
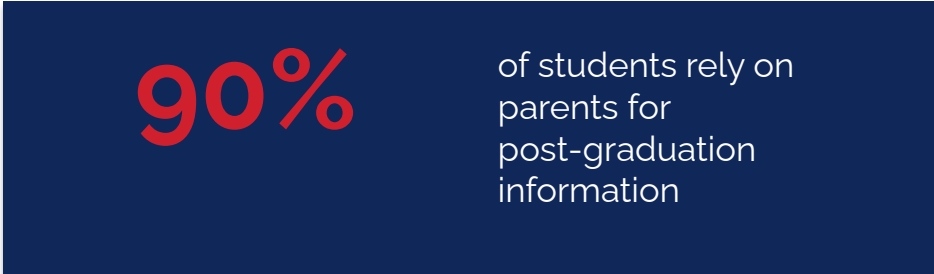


Source: [Center for Democracy and Technology](#)

Leverage AI to Strengthen Family Engagement in Advising

Families are the most influential source of guidance for students. Almost none of the AI advising tools being built include them.

State Action	What This Looks Like
Support earlier and more consistent engagement	Ensure AI tools support engagement beginning in earlier grades , not just at senior transition points. Prompt structured conversations between students & families about career interests.
Require AI to surface high-impact experiences for families	Ensure systems highlight work-based learning, advanced coursework, and dual credit and explain their relevance to long-term outcomes. Design for accessibility and context.
Establish transparency requirements in AI advising systems	Require visibility into when students interact with AI, the recommendations generated, and how those align with student data and advising milestones. (CHATBOT ACT)
Require family inclusion in AI policy development	Include families in AI policy design, acceptable use guidelines, and communication strategies. Co-design approaches (e.g. EDSAFE AI Alliance) can strengthen trust and alignment.



Source: [Britebound Teen Next Steps](#)

Train and Test AI Advising Tools for Context and Quality

AI tools are only as effective as the context they are trained to reflect. Default outputs are often insufficiently grounded in data and disconnected from how advising actually functions.

State Action	What This Looks Like
Require alignment to state advising frameworks	Ensure AI tools are trained on state structures including ILPs/ACPs , career pathway requirements , and state career development models .
Codify practice-level guidance for advising interactions	Define clear standards for advising practice: pedagogical design, conversation scripts, milestone-aligned guidance and invest in curated video libraries
Provide, curate, and invest in high-quality state-specific data	Make available datasets that improve accuracy and relevance: statewide longitudinal data systems , and financial aid opportunity data
Establish state-led pilot environments and validation processes	Create ' sandbox ' environments to test AI tools prior to deployment (DE), Vet and approve tools for district use.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION PLAN

BASIC INFORMATION

Name:

9th Grade Entry Date:

☐ Academic Support Plan Attached

High School Attending:

Originating Middle School:

EDUCATION GOALS

Diploma Pathway

☐ TOPS University Diploma☐ Jump Start TOPS Tech (Career) Diploma

Diploma Endorsements

☐ Community Service Diploma Endorsement☐ Freedom Endorsement☐ State Seal of Biliteracy☐ STEM Diploma Endorsement

Financial Aid & Scholarships

☐ TOPS Honors☐ TOPS Performance☐ TOPS Opportunity☐ TOPS Tech Early Start☐ TOPS Tech☐ TOPS Excellence

COLLEGE & CAREER GOALS

Career Occupation Interests (Option 1):

Jump Start Graduation Pathway Interests (Option 1):

-

Career Occupation Interests (Option 2):

Jump Start Graduation Pathway Interests (Option 2):

-

Post-High School Workforce Plans:

☐ On-the-Job Training☐ Military☐ Employment

Certifications:

☐ Advanced☐ Basic Bundle☐ Basic

career connections

Career Connections is a joint initiative among the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, Ohio Department of Higher Education, OhioMeansJobs and Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. Career Connections began in 2012 by providing a framework by which students develop a vision and realistic plan for their futures – during K-12 and beyond. Learning strategies are embedded into Ohio's New Learning Standards for English language arts, math, science and social studies. Career Connections aligns the many efforts around college and career readiness to support students in becoming productive and engaged citizens.



Career Awareness Elementary Grades (K-5) Students become familiar with careers through learning that connects classroom instruction to future work. Career awareness strategies show students various types of careers and stimulate interest in future work.	Career Exploration Middle Grades (6-8) Students explore their career interests through embedded activities. Career exploration strategies are opportunities for students to discover work environments and understand the various aspects of the workplace. Strategies include tools and instruments that help students understand and appreciate their strengths and interests. Students start plans for their future with career information and postsecondary education data. Plans include course selection and planning as well as career aspirations and goals.	Career Planning High School (9-12) Students continue career exploration while focusing on career planning. Activities provide advanced experiences that offer hands-on opportunities in a workplace. Career planning strategies focus on making clear links between career options and educational decisions. Students develop the skills to revisit previous exploration and planning strategies as they face career changes throughout life.
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Recommendations for Funders

Investments that Complement & Expand State Policy Levers

Fund the data, governance, evaluation, and implementation supports that grow state capacity and help states spread and scale promising practices.

01

Scale AI Within Existing Platforms

- Help states develop AI evaluation frameworks ([NC](#))
- Prioritize embedding AI into statewide CCR platforms (e.g. [WA](#), [FL](#)) already serving students
- Fund data integration between AI tools and state or district systems (e.g. [NC](#), [KY](#), [MS](#))
- Invest in targeted pilots across district contexts
- Extend quality advising into frontier AI models by building custom GPTs

02

Build Open, Shared Data Infrastructure

- Invest in national labor market [data](#) aligned to demand
- Fund ROI and outcomes [data](#) for short-term credential programs
- Build open-access repositories of student postsecondary outcome [data](#) by district/school
- Encourage edtech providers to publish [model cards](#) documenting training data and bias and support development of open [APIs](#)

03

Invest in Research–Practice Partnerships

- Fund longitudinal studies tracking outcomes over time
- Support [rapid-cycle RCTs](#) testing scalability across contexts
- Invest in cross-site learning [networks](#) for early adopters to share lessons
- Assess cognitive and social-emotional risks within AI advising and mitigation approaches

04

Support State Leadership & Governance

- Fund state strategy development connecting AI to CCR systems and counseling work
- Support dedicated state AI roles or teams (e.g. [UT](#))
- Enable cross-agency [collaboration](#) across K–12, higher education, and workforce systems
- Fund state grant programs to pilot and implement AI advising tools (e.g. [IN](#))

THE BOTTOM LINE

AI will not improve advising systems on its own.

Its impact will be determined by how it is governed, where it is applied, and whether the systems around it are designed to use it effectively.

-
- ✓ States: Set direction, define use cases, guardrails, and educator roles
 - ✓ Funders: Invest in infrastructure & conditions, not isolated tools
 - ✓ Partners: Prioritize integration, co-design, and evidence generation

States that get this right will do it carefully, methodically, and with students and families at the center.

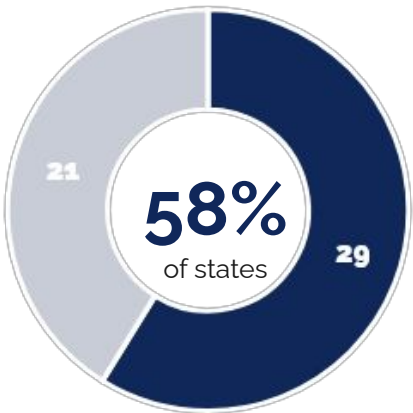
Appendix I

State Policy Indicators

States Are Split on Connected Advising Policies

Universal FAFSA remains the exception, while a growing number of states include requirements for student ACPs/ILPs

ACP/ILP Requirement

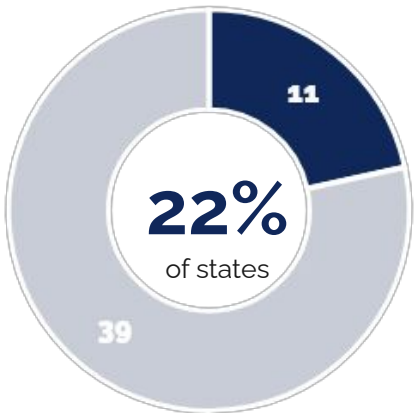


■ Yes ■ No

KEY THEMES

- Some states specifically include the ILP/ACP as a part of a graduation requirement while others have less strict statutory language or language that defers to LEA implementation
- States vary in when they expect students to start ILPs/ACPs; some set expectations for beginning in middle schools, while others don't start until high school
- Most states do not have comprehensive monitoring and enforcement systems

Universal FAFSA



■ Yes ■ No

KEY THEMES

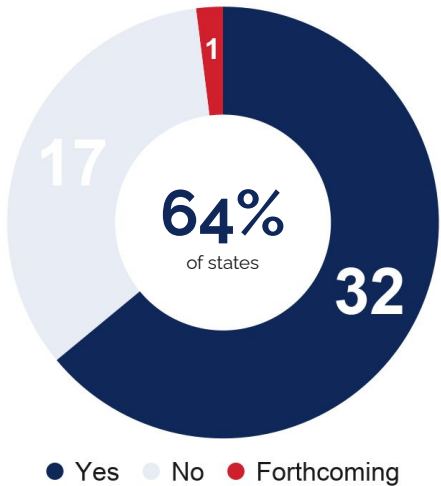
- Three states (KS, NH, and LA) had previously passed universal FAFSA but recently repealed the legislation
- All states provide an opt-out process for students
- Maryland and Michigan are currently considering universal FAFSA policies

Most States Have a CCR Platform, but Build Approaches Diverge

Among states with a statewide CCR platform, ownership splits nearly evenly across state-developed, commercial, and hybrid models.

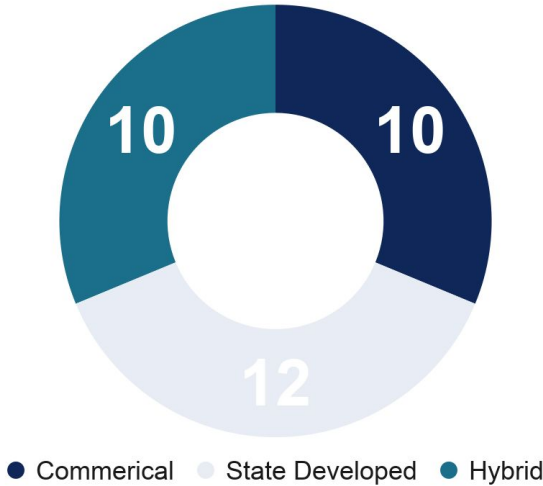
Statewide CCR Platform

STATEWIDE CCR PLATFORM:
Free to districts and single provider. Minimum functionality bar for state-developed and hybrid tools. List excludes states with high commercial-platform saturation that isn't SEA-mandated/funded



Platform Type

HYBRID
Applies to states where a platform company white-labeled its tool for the state to use and rebrand.



KEY THEMES

- Xello holds three statewide contracts: **Florida, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin.**
- SchoolLinks holds one statewide contract: **Washington.**
- Level All holds five statewide contracts: **Connecticut, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, and West Virginia** (Level All has different functionalities than other commercial providers)
- Functionality varies widely across commercially developed platforms.
- Most state-platform contracts were signed within the last three to four years.
- Common hybrid platforms: **Kuder** (3 states), **IntoCareers** (2), **XAP** (2), **Headed2** (2), **PipelineAZ** (1)

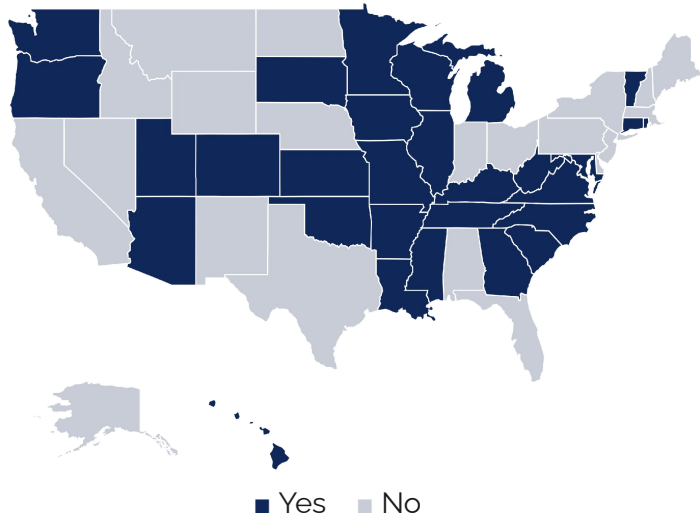
Nearly Half of States Invest in Advisor Training or Credentialing

Support ranges from mandatory, role-specific credentials to voluntary state-run training, while the majority of states set no requirement at all.

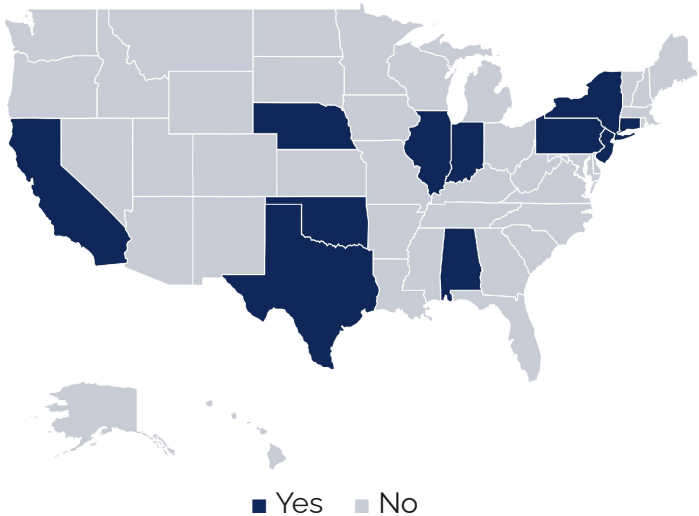
Category	# of States	List of States	State Example
Role - Specific Credential	3	GA, IN, CT	Indiana awarded 28 intermediary organizations career coaching grants to work alongside partner schools. Career coaches must hold a certification in individual personality and interest inventory interpretation that has been approved by the Indiana Department of Education.
Certification Trainings	1	WY	Wyoming's Department of Education provides a " Facilitating Career Development Course " for a work-based learning (WBL) endorsement. Sessions cover the 12 competencies required for a WBL endorsement. Counselors, administrators, and teachers are all encouraged to participate.
State-Run Advisor PD	10	AL, ID, IL, MD, MS, MO, TN, TX, UT, WA	Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, alongside the Washington Student Achievement Council, facilitate trainings for multiple advising roles focused on college and career readiness. Topics include financial aid awareness and career exploration.
Role-Specific Credential + State Run Advisor PD	3	IA, NM, SC	South Carolina's Career Specialists (CS) are required to complete the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certification or be certified school counselors that complete the Facilitating Career Development training. The state also runs annual CS conferences .
Role-Specific Credential + Certification Trainings	2	AK, ND	Arkansas's Career Coaches are required to have a Career Development Facilitator (CDF) credential or must obtain it within one year of employment. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education runs trainings for these credentials at no-cost.
All Three Strategies	2	NC, VA*	North Carolina requires its Career Development Coordinators (CDCs) to have a role-specific license . The Department of Public Instruction's CDC induction program covers some of the requirements for this license. The state association hosts conferences and trainings for CDCs.

50 State Landscape Scan

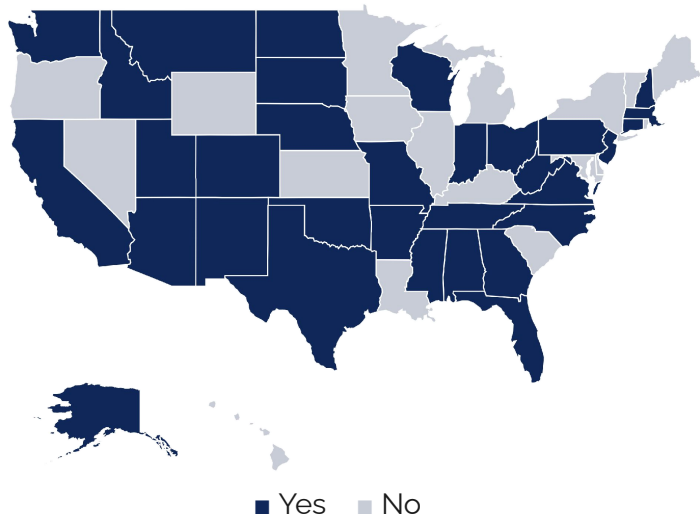
ACP/ILP Requirement



Universal FAFSA



Statewide CCR Platform



Advisor Credential Requirement

