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# **Mental Health Matters: Every Student Matters**

**Improving access to  
care within Riverside  
School District**

**January - March 2025**

**April 15, 2025**

Riverside School District

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# Mental Health Matters: Every Student Matters

## First quarter: January through March 31, 2025 Summary

The district counseling team continues to prioritize the program activities outlined in Grant ID 38311: School Mental Health & Safety & Security as awarded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) STOP School Violence Grant for FY2022 focusing on school safety strategies for Riverside School District (RSD).

The STOP Grant reporting requirements that began January 18, 2023, in conjunction with these quarterly **Mental Health Matters** reports highlight the action steps related to improving access to mental health services, training and education to prevent school violence, promoting student health and well-being, and improving school climate. Meeting the challenges associated with being a member of a multi-disciplinary team within an educational setting requires an understanding and respect for the role of each team member as we continue the Mental Health Initiative (MHI) work during our third year. Integration of mental health services within the school culture, a key objective of the MHI, is a goal reached in increments and is achieved through the solidification of relationships.

Similar to the therapeutic alliance created between a counselor and student, a trusting relationship develops over time within the principles of ethical behavior. Our Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) must abide by their respective Code of Ethics, the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics that devotes a section to Confidentiality and Privacy. This section details the counselors' responsibility to establish and uphold appropriate boundaries, disclosing only essential information with the permission of the student and/or legal guardian. Remembering that the students "health" is everyone's priority, we are dedicated to collaboration and committed to establishing consensus on strategies and approaches to reach the agreed-upon goals.

### ***Key Objectives***

- (a) continued integration within the school culture and expansion of the role for each Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and supervisory staff promoting health;
- (b) securing sustainable funding for LPCs (ex. Medical Assistance (MA) provider status; School Based Access Program (SBAP) billing for Special Education students).

### ***Action Steps***

1. Both Shannon Wells and Samantha (Valente) Carlin continue their group offerings with the assistance of a masters' level intern within the Counseling Department;
2. Ongoing meetings with Mr. Brennan and administrators focused on supplying necessary data to support targeted mental health grant funding, and identification of relevant on-line learning focused on health and safety via Vector Solutions & PCCD-required trainings for all staff in 2025 (Feb 10<sup>th</sup> & March 10<sup>th</sup> Act 80 days);

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3. Weekly supervisory team meetings with the LPCs to support creative and proactive school based interventions, in partnership with LIU18 outpatient and CSBBH services within the district, and other community resources;
  4. Active participation in SAIP meetings designed to address social determinants of health and mental health concerns identified as barriers to attendance, in partnership with school leadership and community partners;
  5. All LPCs are active participants in the school-specific SAP/Success discussions;
  6. Participation in “gaming” educational webinar on January 14<sup>th</sup>, with follow up discussions with IT staff and students, encouraging senior high student presentation to leadership about the value of these offerings/eSports for engaging students;
  7. Shannon Wells, LPC represented RSD during March 17<sup>th</sup> airing of program on WVIA about Teen Suicide. She highlighted Aevium and Sources of Strength, in addition to the advantages of our in-school continuum of care for immediate access to help;
  8. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, met with Ms. Mickavicz’s class after viewing their videos related to opioid drug abuse (PIAA contest) to better understand their experience completing the assignment, and also solicit their assistance with the Sources of Strength presentation on March 25<sup>th</sup>;
  9. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, met with Hazel Health to discuss option of “free” telehealth mental health services for our students, being made available through a one-year funding opportunity from United Healthcare and state dollars. Summary information has been shared with administration, and additional questions have been asked of Hazel Health related to the required MOU, implementation plans targeting next academic year (2025/2026), etc.
  10. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, joined discussion with Vector leadership to provide feedback on current executive orders so that they remain compliant with district needs as they review and expand their offerings.

***Benchmarks of Success (as previously reported: a-d)***

1. Dedicated time with staff, in combination with on line training modules, to achieve compliance with STOP grant objectives by the end of the Project (October 2025). Objective one states: (a) *at least 90% of school staff members, (b) at least 15 local police officers, (c) and 75% of District students in grades 6-12 will increase understanding and knowledge through training to identify students who are at-risk of mental health problems and of the trauma informed approach to mitigate and respond to potential school violence incidences.*
  - (a) Result: 99.5% compliance with staff training objective during February 2024. February and March 2025 mandatory staff training results: 93.5% compliant as of April 2, 2025 (173 of 185 staff members completed all mandatory Vector and PCCD trainings – with deadline of April 13<sup>th</sup> expected to achieve full compliance).
  - (b) Result: 18 local police officers certified in evidence based Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.
  - (c) Result: 21 students trained in the spring of 2024 in Youth MHFA, with training repeating during spring of 2025. Youth MHFA trained 10 students at the high

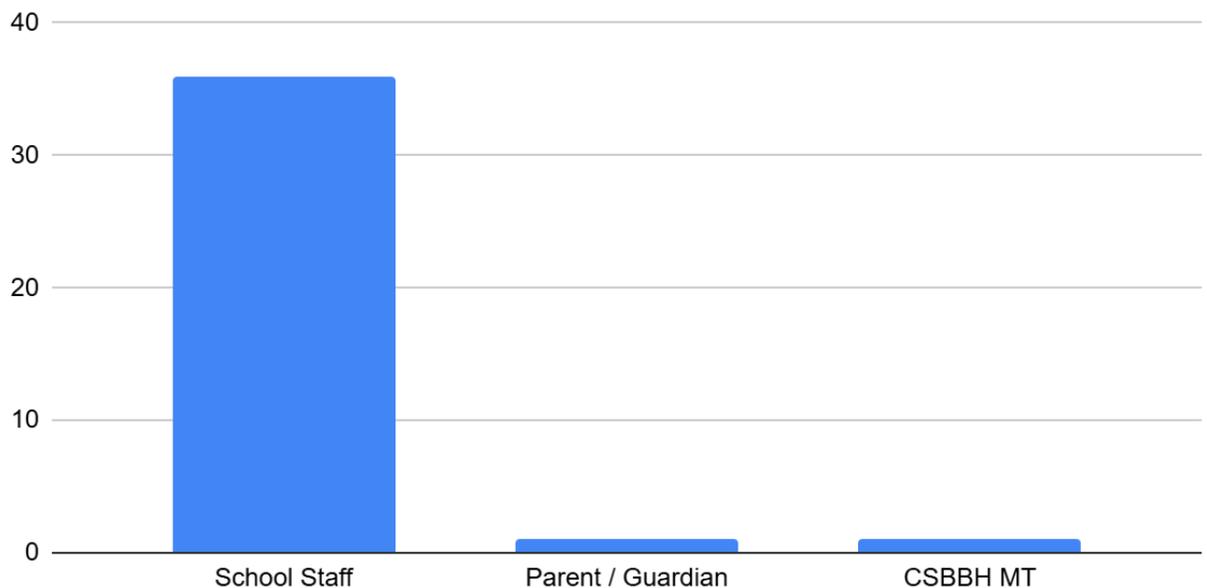
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school March 24<sup>th</sup> & 26, 2025; with second course scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

- (d) Interest in the designation of Aavidum as a Club within the high school continues, with 11 RSD students and counseling department personnel participating in the NEIU-sponsored activity at Lakeland High School on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Formal request for Club status shared with administration on February 18, 2025.
- (e) On March 25, 2025 twenty (20) Peer and five (5) Adult Advisors trained in the evidence-based Sources of Strength model presented to invited guests this strength-based, resiliency focused, upstream suicide prevention program that launched in February with our 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades at East.
- (f) Target identified within the STOP grant for the 3-year Project period (October 2022 through October 2025) also includes the reduction by 10% of the number of referrals to outside agencies. During this quarter (Jan- March), ten (10) students were referred for OP services as of March 31, 2025.

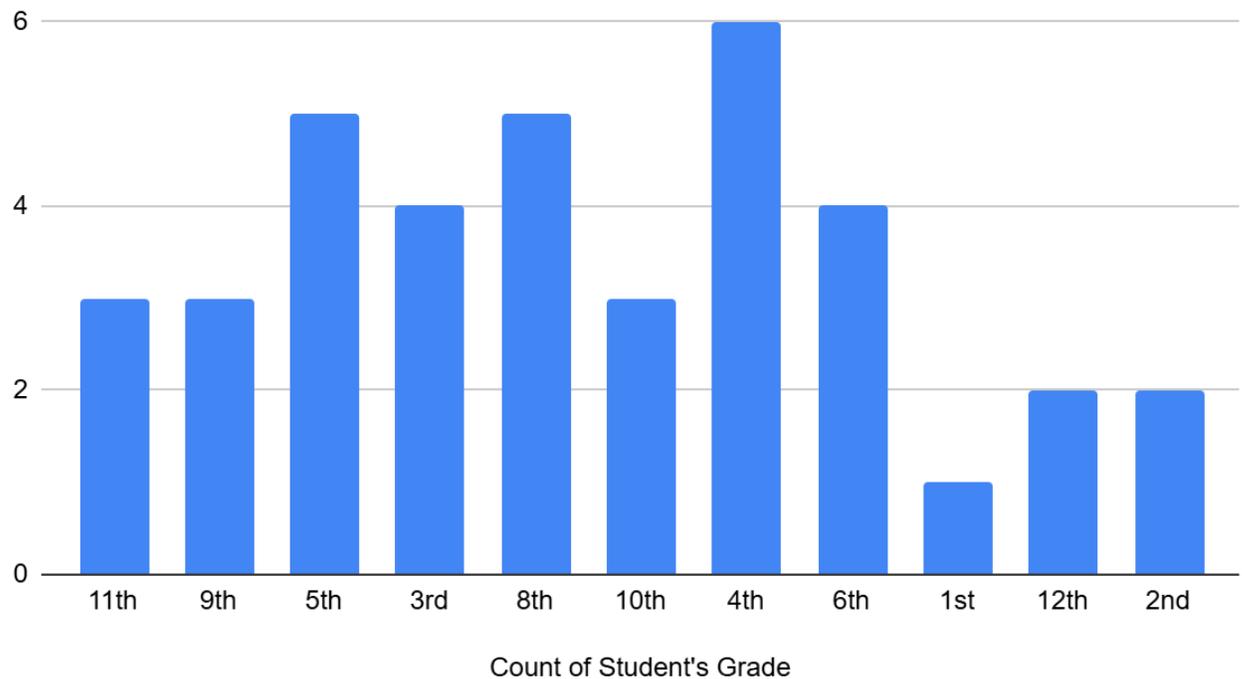
Of the 38 students referred during January through March 2025, 36 were referred by “school staff”, a consolidated category created in September, to replace prior referral categories of “administration and counseling staff”. One student was referred by the CSBBH team, and one was referred by parents/guardians.

Count of The person completing this referral is:



The following table identifies the distribution of referrals by grade level, noting the highest number during this quarter came from 4<sup>th</sup> grade (total population of 111), followed by 5<sup>th</sup> (114) and 8<sup>th</sup> (104).

Count of Student's Grade



**Key Objective**

(c) supporting policy revisions/development and implementation to assure compliance with best practices, current legislative and educational requirements.

**Action Steps**

1. Reviewed PSBA suicide policies with Scott Pentasuglio and updated RSD’s current Suicide Crisis Response Policy after consultation with Mr. Yarem and K. Wallace (NSPI); submitted to Scott on March 1, 2024.
2. Draft Canine/therapy dog (visitation) Policy submitted to administration on September 25, 2024.
3. Seized opportunity to begin launch of evidence based, upstream suicide prevention program in January within East Elementary with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade student leadership.
4. Youth MHFA offered twice a year within our Jr/Sr High School by two LPCs who are certified to deliver same to the adolescent population.
5. Ongoing collaborative planning with Compliance Officer and Superintendent to assure on-line Vector training for all staff targets areas of need identified by internal and external sources (ex. PCCD).

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6. Continued participation by C. Wydeen as RSD designee to regional Flight Team as developed by NEIU 19 as crisis-response to enrolled districts.

***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Suicide/Crisis Response Procedures disseminated and understood by all staff after finalization by administration.
2. Designation of the Aevium group to club status within the district, acknowledging another step in our stigma-reducing activities by spreading the message of “I’ve got your back” via student-directed activities and staff support within our Jr/Sr High School.
3. Continued distribution of the monthly “Counselor Corner”, highlighting topics of interest and health promotion during the academic year.

***Key Objective***

(d) coordinating with local partners/agencies

***Action Steps***

1. Ongoing attendance at Suicide Prevention Alliance group of Lackawanna County.
2. Continued participation in monthly System of Care meetings led by the Behavioral Health Coordinator from the Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention. Continued participation with NSPI in support of suicide prevention.
3. Monthly discussion with Lackawanna County Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Use) and Office of Youth & Family Services (OYFS) leadership with goal of facilitating communication and access to services for our youth and their families in a timely manner.

***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Meaningful communication with agency partners and improved access to needed resources for our youth and families as described previously.
2. Invitation to meet with East/West PTA on February 19<sup>th</sup> to talk about the counseling department/resources available within the district, in addition to information about the Sources of Strength initiative and “Getting the Word Out” campaign being launched.

***Key Objective***

(e) increasing access to data to inform decision-making

***Action Steps***

1. Continued review of Year 1 and Year 2 data (ending December 2024) and discussions with key stakeholders to identify variables of interest for quantitative and qualitative analysis of this initiative.

***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Using data from survey sources, in addition to diverse stakeholder input described above, review of priorities within the mental health initiative targeted for first quarter 2025.

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2. Acceptance of PASA and PSBA 2025 school leadership October conference presentation (A Common Strength Based Framework for School Boards, Educators, and Clinicians). Notification of status due by July 31, 2025.
  3. Contract with an approved vendor to conduct a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment of our school entity (from the PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry) as detailed in the **Revised Behavioral Health Baseline Criteria (2023) with Examples**, noting Level 1, 2, and 3 distinctions (listing shared with administration April 7, 2025).