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**Mental Health Matters:  
Improving access to care  
within Riverside School  
District November 2022 –  
January 18, 2023**

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**JANUARY 18, 2023**

**Riverside School District  
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# Mental Health Matters

November 18, 2022 – January 13, 2023 Summary

Since the launch of the expanded mental health services within Riverside School District (RSD) on November 18, 2022, the investment by Riverside personnel in identifying and supporting the mental health needs of its students and families has been impressive. Embarking on a collaborative journey and starting with the priority goals listed below, this summary identifies the initial program activities outlined in Grant ID 38311: School Mental Health & Safety and Security as awarded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD):

- (a) onboarding three (3) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs); investigating sustainable funding
- (b) supporting policy revisions and implementation to assure compliance with current legislative and educational requirements
- (c) coordinating with local partners/agencies
- (d) increasing access to data to inform decision-making



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## **Key Objective**

- (a) onboarding the three (3) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs); engaging with school personnel to orient them about the mental health resources and how they can access same; investigating sustainable funding for LPCs (ex. Medical Assistance (MA) provider status; School Based Access Program (SBAP) billing for Special Education students)

## **Action Steps**

1. Nicole (Dunbar) Brush and Jacob Herber began Dec 5, 2022; Samantha Valente started Dec 19, 2022.
2. On Dec 14, 2022 district-wide email sent from JT Yarem detailing the additional mental health resources, inclusive of profiles for new team members. This was followed by individual introductions at each building: High School on Dec 19<sup>th</sup>; West on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> and at East on Dec 21, 2022. Leadership provided an overview of the services, including the updated referral form/process to begin immediately. N. Brush assigned to the High School, J. Herber to East and S. Valente to West, with commitment that as individual student needs dictate, staffing accommodations will be made.

## **Benchmarks of Success**

1. Decreased number of referrals to Out Patient services provided by LIU18 (130 during 2021/2022 school year)
2. Three LPCs enrolled with PA Medical Assistance to provide billable “Social Work and Counseling Services” under the School Based Access Program (SBAP)
3. Quarterly submission of referral data within future reports beginning April 2023
4. LPCs enrolled as HealthChoices/MA service providers within RSD

## **Key Objective**

- (b) supporting policy revisions and implementation (ex. Suicide Crisis Response Plan) to assure compliance with current legislative and educational requirements

## **Action Steps**

1. In collaboration with Kathy Wallace, NSPI, revisions to Suicide Crisis Response policy submitted 1/17/2023 to school administration
2. Trauma informed approach plan beginning with staff survey distribution 1/30/2023

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## ***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Updated Suicide Crisis Response policy submitted to School Board January 2023
2. Approved policy implementation plan initiated district-wide February 2023

## ***Key Objective***

(c) coordinating with local partners/agencies

## ***Action Steps***

1. On Dec 20, 2022: meeting with Lackawanna/Susquehanna Counties Single County Authority (SCA) to discuss additional prevention/treatment options for the district
2. LGBTQ+ training inclusive of school counselors, administration, and building principles completed by Joel Brecht of Community Care on Dec 20, 2022
3. Scranton Counseling Center(SCC) training January 10, 2023 to review Mental Health Crisis Services and further solidify referral processes
4. Letter of Agreement being established with Scranton Counseling Center (SCC) as the mental health crisis provider in Lackawanna County

## ***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Additional D&A programming (building specific) based upon expressed needs
2. Draft treatment-focused policy vs. suspension/fines to decrease stigma and promote entry into evidence based treatment interventions
3. Peer support group in the High School

## ***Key Objective***

(d) increasing access to data to inform decision-making: selecting a needs assessment(s) that will identify the gaps and provide additional focus for mental health services

## ***Action Steps***

1. Reviewed results of 2019/2020 School Climate Survey (SCS) across domains related to: (a) total school climate (b) social/emotional learning (c) student support, and (d) safe school.

Staff reports the worst scores in the Social/Emotional learning category; highest scores in the Student Support Category, though student support scores drop as students get older. Students identified as Multi-Racial in high school reported unfavorable social/emotional learning scores, as did staff.

2. Agreement to launch evidence-based SCS February 2023, with additional questions related to vulnerable minority populations. Targeted outreach

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planned to students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members to increase survey response rates.

3. PA Youth Survey (PAYS) 2021 Summary Report described risk and protective factors related to alcohol, marijuana, e-cigs/vaping behavior, in addition to antisocial/illegal behavior. School climate and safety are measured by commitment & involvement at school, in after school & community programs, violence (actual & threatened) and bullying. The importance of prosocial programs supporting social & emotional health of youth were protective factors in decreasing substance use disorders and fostering resilience.
4. Enrolled as district, and part of NEIU 19 “region” to participate in the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE) January 2023 as an evidence based tool designed to collect regional data regarding the mental health needs of districts.

### ***Benchmarks of Success***

1. Increased response rate/participation from parent/guardian and community during February 2023 School Climate Survey
2. Review of existing district-wide “prosocial programs supporting social and emotional health” as opportunities to enhance offerings through inclusion of mental health educational material
3. Launch of Aavidum (“I’ve got your back”) club Spring 2023, designed to positively impact school culture and reduce youth suicide, based on the characteristics of healthy community: acceptance, appreciation, acknowledgement and caring

