
Mental Health Matters: Improving access to care within Riverside School District April – June 2023

JULY 17, 2023

**Riverside School District
Authored by: Christine R. Wydeen**

Mental Health Matters

Second quarter: April through June 30, 2023 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) while integrating these activities into the MultiTiered System of Supports (MTSS) that include:

- (a) continued integration of the team within the school culture and expansion of the program offerings by team members based upon identified student, family, building, and district priorities
- (b) continued investigation of sustainable funding
- (c) supporting policy revisions/development and implementation to assure compliance with current **best practices**, legislative and educational requirements
- (d) coordinating with local partners/agencies
- (e) increasing access to data to inform decision-making

Key Objectives

- (a) continued integration within the school culture and expansion of the role for each Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) 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. Jacob Herber, LPC (East) completed K-12 three day Student Assistance Program (SAP) training March 31, 2023 at NEIU, allowing his attendance (in addition to N. Brush who has already completed this required training) at these meetings.
2. As routine referrals for mental health services are received they are assigned the most appropriate resource within the continuum (e.g. LPC, outpatient, CSBBH, etc.), and updates made within FOCUS. Urgent or emergency referrals are seen immediately.
3. In collaboration with JT Yarem, review of referral processing to assure attentiveness to the behavioral health needs of special education students; and feedback process with LIU 18 leadership for outpatient referrals.

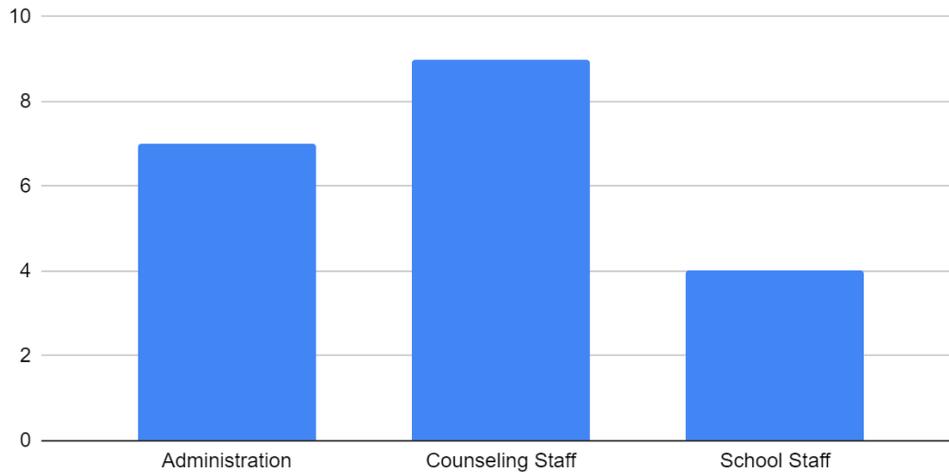
Benchmarks of Success

1. Target was a decreased number of referrals to Out Patient (OP) services provided by LIU18 (130 during 2021/2022 school year): as of June 30th, a total of 102 students are active in OP services (25 at East, 40 at the Jr/Sr High

School, and 37 at West). LIU 18 continues to employ three clinicians and one Physician Assistant (PA) who provide therapeutic intervention and onsite medication prescribing and monitoring within RSD, improving access and removing barriers for students and families needing this level of care.

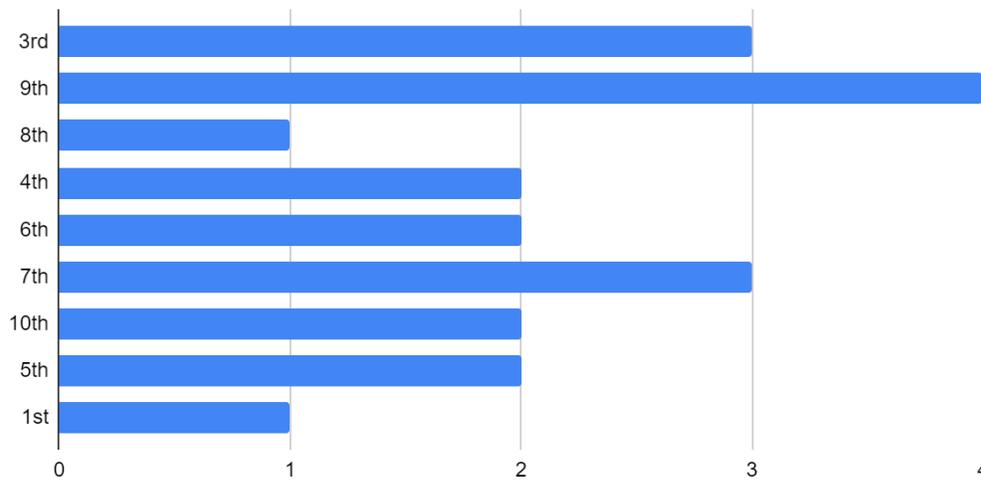
2. Three LPCs are targeted for enrollment with PA Medical Assistance to provide billable “Social Work and Counseling Services” under the School Based Access Program (SBAP) during the next quarterly opportunity (July 2023) as prescribed by MD within their special education plans.
3. Summary of referral data April through June 2023 follows noting referral source and count per grade (20 total this qtr.):

Count of The person completing this referral is:



Count of The person completing this referral is:

Count of Student's Grade



Count of Student's Grade

-
4. LPCs enrolled as HealthChoices/MA service providers within RSD: on April 21st, lengthy discussion with NBHCC staff, two members of their Board, Community Care, and RSD leadership to answer outstanding questions related to the LPC role and sustainability need beyond the grant period. On June 6th we were (unofficially) notified that the NBHCC Board of Directors did not support the expansion request for our four LPCs, and that a letter should be coming through the Network Department of Community Care Behavioral Health Organization with the directions for an appeal.

Key Objective

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

Action Steps

1. Joined meeting led by Scott Pentasuglio on April 20th to review progress related to crisis team members in each school, protocols, etc.
2. Acting planning discussions with IT and counseling department team members during May to discuss electronic tool to capture crisis assessment and data for future reporting.
3. Investigation of Mental Health Youth First Aid training (MHYFA) and Train the Trainer options per grant specifications.
4. Understanding of the need and action planning related to educational offerings for coaching staff, as initially discussed during this time period.
5. Increasing district-wide efforts related to trauma informed/sensitive approaches, understanding its helpfulness in meeting the needs of students and staff.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Crisis Response Procedures (2022/2023) disseminated and understood as finalized under Scott Pentasuglio's direction.
2. Google doc created that includes all the information currently on the crisis referral assessment that is shared with the Lackawanna County mental health crisis provider (Scranton Counseling Center). Signature pad purchased allowing for electronic parent/guardian signature, as required for those students under 14. Testing of process and discussion with SCC to occur over the summer.
3. RSD staff and interested School Board members invited to attend free, virtual MHYFA training on Saturday, July 29th. (a) Two of the LPCs have submitted applications to become trainers for MHYFA which is a 3-day interactive training (at an estimated cost of \$2500 per person), after completion of the required MHYFA 8-hour training. (b) NAMI of NEPA has been requested to

train 150 of RSD staff and personnel identified in the grant on Sept 5th and Oct 9, 2023 (4 hrs. each day) as part of the teacher in-service days that the district has designated for this evidence based training. NAMI cost is \$1333 per 30 participants.

4. Confirmation from district administration, School Board, and athletic director that 30 minutes will be allocated during meeting with Fall-sports-coaches on August 1st from 5:30 to 7:00 PM for “Mental Health Awareness and Support Training for High School Sports Coaches”. Agenda focuses on an introduction to the Counseling Department team, common mental health challenges faced by student athletes, support strategies, and resource information.
5. Additional offerings include invitation to free presentation at Riverside High School by Dr. Jarrod Spencer, Sports Psychologist, on August 20th from 6:00 to 7:30 PM entitled “Mind of the Athlete”. This presentation for athletes, coaches, parents, and community members blends psychology and entertainment while focusing on hope, mental health, and empowerment for athletes, and was made possible through funding from Northeast Suicide Prevention Initiative (NSPI).
6. Launch of Aavidum Club (“I’ve got your back”) spring 2023 with Mental Health Awareness Fair hosted May 25, 2023. Over 25 local agencies/providers responded to the club’s invitation to join us for a fun day focused on the importance of self-care and attendance to whole health.

As one RSD alumnus shared:

Hi Tina,

I wanted to congratulate you and your team and the Riverside School Board on a great event! The event was so well organized and attended. In addition, the Aavidum Club students really worked hard to make the event a great success. It did not go unnoticed.

Please keep Community Care in mind for future events.

Sincerely,

Jeff

Jeff Romey, Community Relations | Community Care Behavioral Health Organization | 72 Glenmaura National Blvd. 2nd Floor | Moosic, PA 18507 | T: 570-496-1315 | F: 1-866-558-2618. romeyjp@cdbh.com

Key Objective

- (d) coordinating with local partners/agencies

Action Steps

1. Coordinated with high school leadership, Single County Authority (SCA), and PA Ambulance for onsite Narcan administration training.

2. During conversation with Taylor librarians to request their completion of School Climate Surveys, discussed their request for suicide awareness presentation to local librarians that they will convene.

3. On June 1st, met with Mr. Yarem, Jennifer Passanti (Exec Dir of Center for Health & Human Services Research & Action of Lackawanna County) and Atty. Richard Gold (consultant to Lacka Co Office of Children & Youth Services) as part of a CDC grant they have been awarded. This planning grant identifies the goals of developing a leadership team (that RSD has been invited to join) and a social determinants of health accelerator plan. Focused on children, with providers and schools, they are interested in learning what types of assessments are done, how they are being used, and what is happening after. They are learning that every school screens or assesses children differently, and the after-action plan might be an area of focus.

4. On June 26th, invited Rashida Lovely to meet with team to discuss “the balance between self-accountability and cultural sensitivity’s that need to be addressed... a (communities of color) conversation about how we can achieve this together”.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Bruce Beauvais, Operations Manager of PA Ambulance delivered Narcan training at the high school on May 25th; with subsequent distribution of three kits (with 12 medication dosages) delivered to J. Gorman, RN on June 2nd so that each school within RSD would have adequate supply.

Follow up all-staff email sent as noted below:

From: **Christine Wydeen** <cwydeen@riversidesd.com>

Sent: **Tuesday, June 6, 2023 1:49 PM**

To: **All District Personnel** <alldistrictper@riversidesd.com>

Subject: **Naloxone follow up**

As everyone gears up for the end of the school year, I just wanted to share that each of our schools have additional Narcan kits thanks to the on-site training done at the end of May at the High School; and as Bruce shared, anyone can access the Lackawanna County DA website and request a “free” kit by mail as part of the county wide initiative to eliminate opioid overdoses.

Please consider viewing the short video on the DA’s website (<https://www.lackawannada.com>) and getting this life-saving medication....since unfortunately the odds are that you know someone who may need it!

[Free Naloxone by Mail - Lackawanna Recovery Coalition](#)

2. On April 12th, presented with Kathy Wallace of NSPI the suicide prevention gatekeeper training to Lackawanna & Luzerne county librarians at Taylor library, as requested.

3. Additional fall D&A programming confirmed through SCA partnership, matching grade-level needs with evidence based programs.

4. Treatment-focused culture vs. suspension/fines to decrease stigma related to initiation of substance use treatment being utilized.

7. “Key Objective

- (e) 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. Evidence-based Pennsylvania School Climate Survey (SCS) open March 13-May 15, 2023 for staff, community members, and students in grades 3rd through 12th.
2. Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) 2023 will launch in September for grades 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th with C. Wydeen identified as test coordinator.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Increased response rate from parent/guardian and community during March 2023 SCS. As of May 15th there were 49 community responses received (vs. <10 in 2019/2020); 149 parent or guardian (<20); 88 staff (42); 329 elementary students (310); and 310 Jr/Sr High School students (523).

2. RSD is above statewide rates in three measured domains of Social Emotional Learning (3.09 vs. 2.68), Student Support (3.07 vs. 2.65) and Safe School (3.11 vs. 2.60). The SCS is an extensive data source available for further analysis, but some focal points are noted below:

- The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) scale measures students’ perception of self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. All respondents scored in the SEL domain agreed that there are opportunities to enhance this learning by assisting students to stop and think before doing anything when they get angry; (not to) give up when they can’t solve a problem easily; (not to) get into arguments when they disagree with people; say mean things to other students when they think the other students deserve it; try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them.
- Staff identified SEL as lowest in 5th and 7th grades; students identified SEL as lowest in 5th, 6th, 10th and 12th grades.
- Student Support (SS) was ranked highest by staff members; with staff and students identifying the lowest scores in 5th and 6th grades.
- Safe School climate was consistent among respondents, with High School students somewhat lower as reflected by the 2.40 score on Question 1c Page 4: “students at this school are often teased or picked on”.

