
Mental Health Matters: Every Student Matters

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

July - September 2025

October 15, 2025

Riverside School District

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Mental Health Matters: Every Student Matters

Third quarter: July through September 30, 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 throughout the year, collaborating on training and education to prevent school violence, promoting student health and well-being, and improving school climate. Integration of mental health services within the school and community environments is a key objective of the Mental Health Initiative (MHI).

Referencing the prior quarterly MHI report and our lived experience, RSD remains vigilant in our search for opportunities to increase our Behavioral Health (BH) supports to match the needs of our students and their families so that we may achieve Level 3 BH Baseline Criteria (2023) as endorsed by the PCCD School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC). While many services are active within our district, prioritizing the following positions may assist us in achieving the desired Level 3 status: a school counselor for every 250 students, full time/dedicated school psychologist for every 500 students, a full-time, certified school social worker for every 250 students (or less for students with more intensive needs), and a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) to meet the increasing needs related to autistic support, learning support, emotional support, and life skills classrooms. The need for Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA), specialized staff training, and application of that training in the classroom continues to grow as our students present with increasingly complex learning and behavioral challenges.

During this reporting quarter our team remained available to provide counseling services for interested students and their families, also attending to administrative responsibilities related to community connections and PAYS implementation scheduled for October 8, 2025. We were also notified by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) that our submission for their annual conference (A Common Strength Based Framework for School Boards, Educators, and Clinicians) was accepted for presentation October 19, 2025 at 2:30 pm. Submission has been made for the National SBA conference April 10-12, 2026 in Texas but unfortunately, we were recently notified that our proposal was not chosen based upon the volume of submissions.

Key reporting components of the STOP grant follow:

Key Objectives

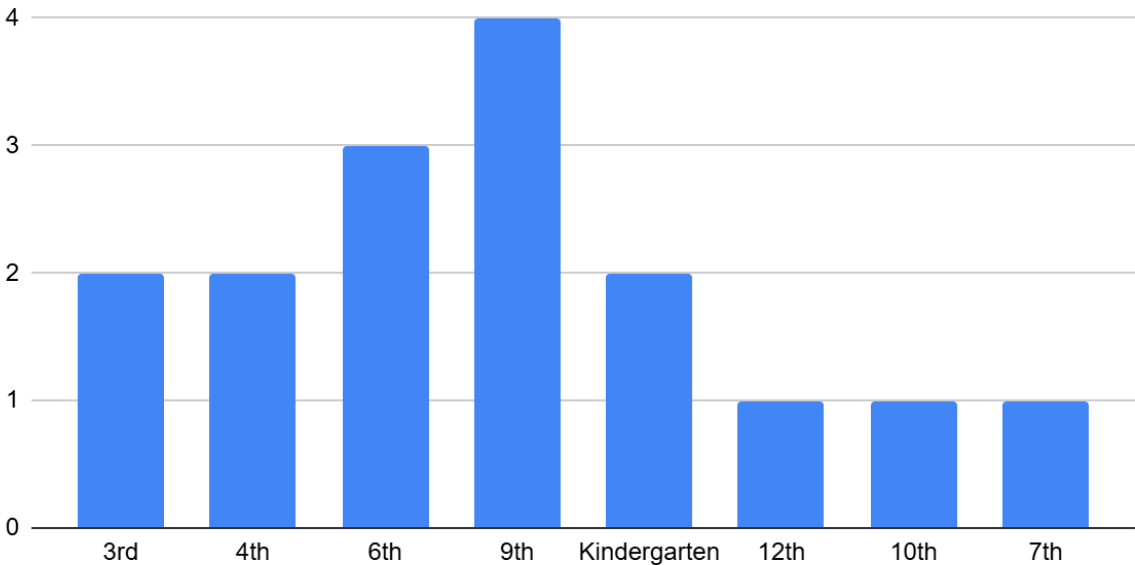
- (a) continued integration within the school culture and expansion of the role for each Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and supervisory staff promoting health;
- (b) securing sustainable funding for LPCs (ex. Medical Assistance (MA) provider status; School Based Access Program (SBAP) billing for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

Action Steps

1. Shannon Wells, Samantha Carlin, and Nicole Brush are continuing their individual and group offerings with the assistance of a masters' level intern (Erica Wheeler) within the Counseling Department under the supervision of JT Yarem;
2. Ongoing meetings with Mr. Brennan and administrators focused on supplying necessary data to support targeted mental health grant funding that has been successful in retaining the three LPCs for the 2025/2026 academic year;
3. Weekly supervisory team meetings with the LPCs to support creative and proactive school-based interventions, in partnership with Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 (LIU) outpatient, and Community and School Based Behavioral Health (CSBBH) services within the district, as well as other community resources;
4. Active participation in the Student Attendance Improvement Plan (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 discussion;
6. Arranged tour of Geisinger/Acadia In-Pt psychiatric hospital at Montage July 30th for the team and Counseling Dept staff;
7. Joined Ms. Wells and community partners for 3rd grade orientation at East Elementary, presenting information about the counseling resources available within the school/district;
8. Welcomed Eryka Vergas to the district to present the many/free/on-site BOOST offerings to the district. Completed MOU to move forward after endorsement by principals and administration for these evidence based, in-person school programs designed to *cultivate a culture of mental, emotional, and social wellbeing across all ages and backgrounds by helping students explore and express their emotions in a trauma-informed manner*;
9. Arranged presentation December 10th at 8:00 am by Jeff Neal, former NFL player, *sharing his personal story to address real-life topics related to mental health and emotional well-being, respect and inclusion, anti-bullying, and peer pressure.*

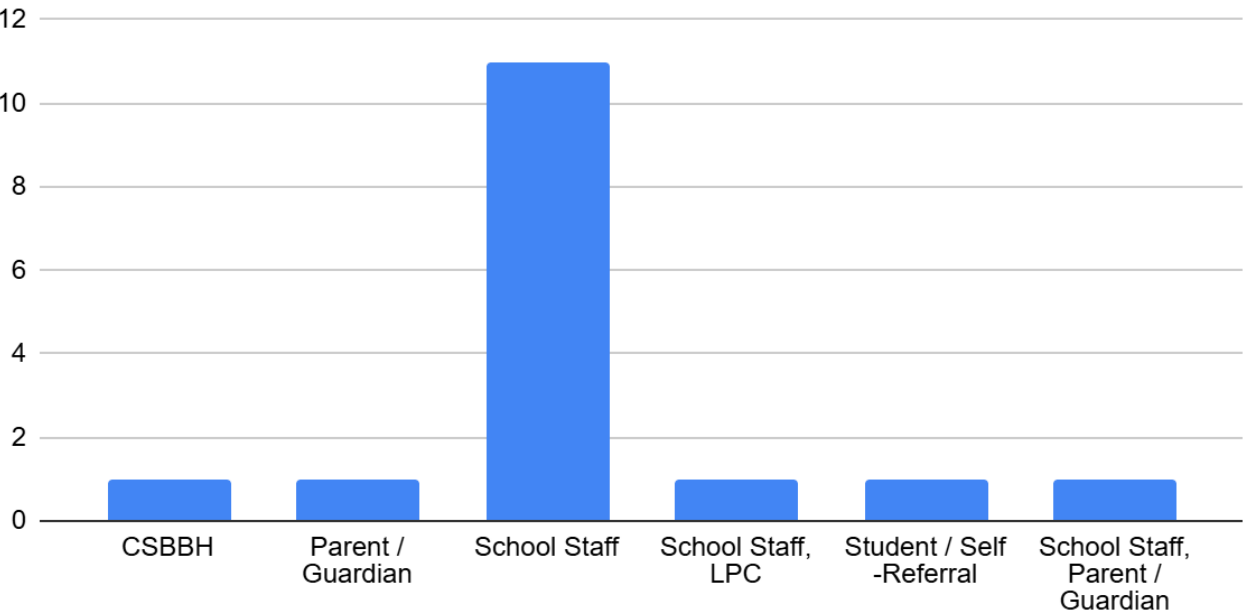
The following tables reflect the distribution of the 16 new referrals made between September 5th through the 29th by a) grade, b) referral source, c) classification of presenting concern, and d) action taken. One (1) student declined, (1) withdrew, and (1) was referred to Special Ed director for follow-up. Of the remaining thirteen (13): six (6) were seen by LPCs in the respective schools, one (1) was referred to Out-Patient (LIU 18) and six (6) were referred to CSBBH as a higher level of care.

Count of Student's Grade



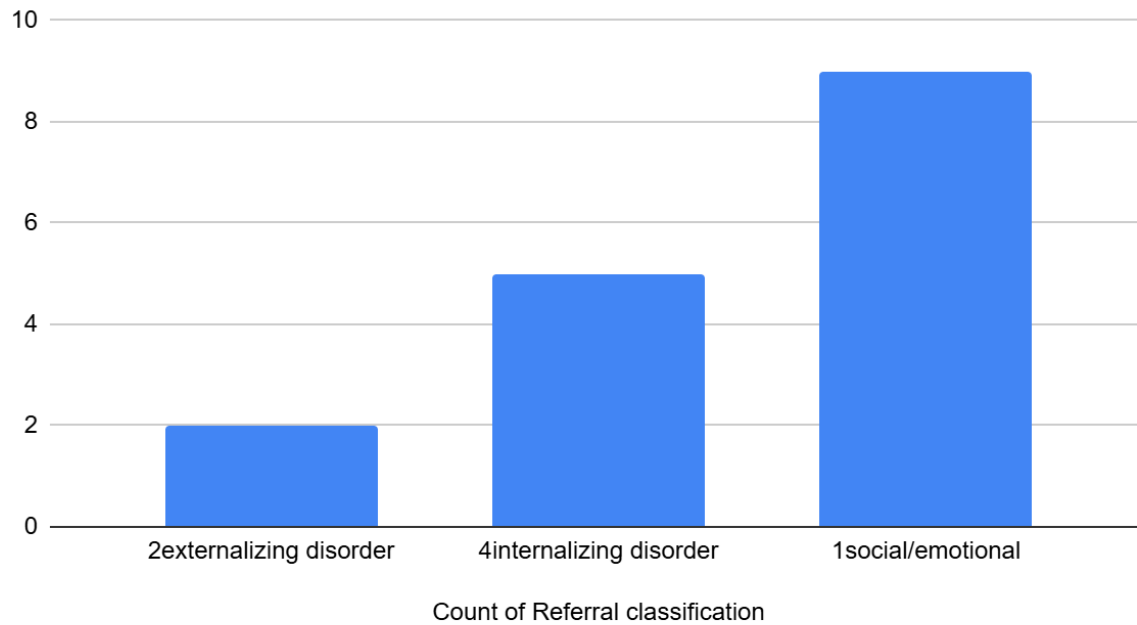
Count of Student's Grade

Count of The person completing this referral is:

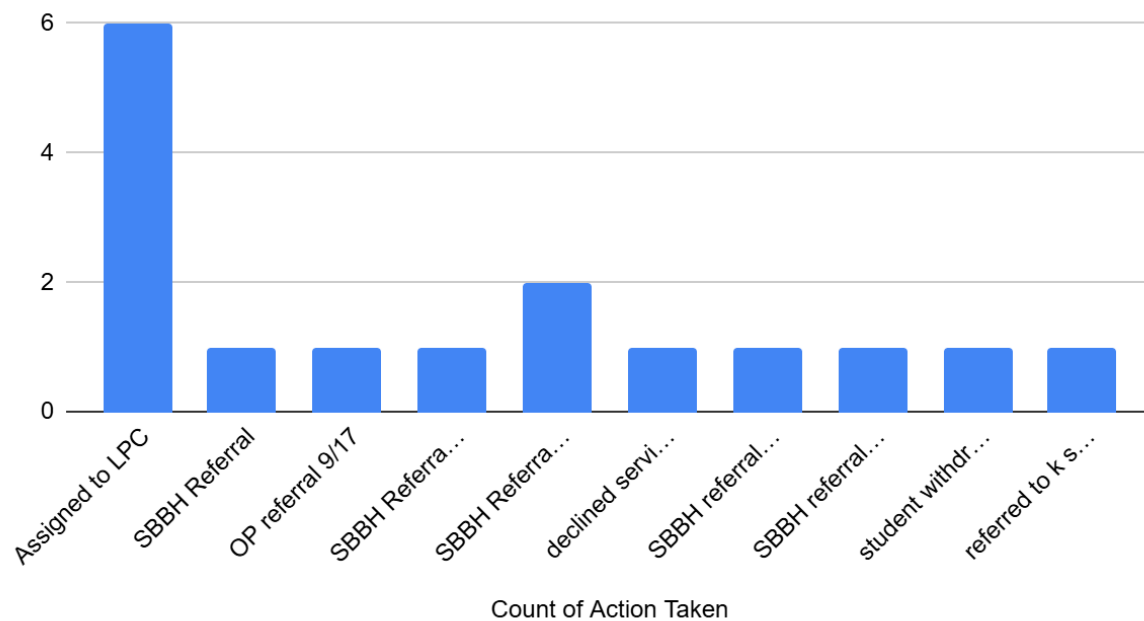


Count of The person completing this referral is:

Count of Referral classification



Count of Action Taken



Key Objectives (cont'd)

(c) 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.
3. Continued participation with NSPI in support of suicide prevention.
4. 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.
5. Continued agreement with Lackawanna/Susquehanna Single County Authority (SCA) for on site programming such as Too Good for Violence, Too Good for Drugs, and Life Skills.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Meaningful communication with agency partners and improved access to needed resources for our youth and families.

Key Objectives (cont'd)

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

Action Steps

1. Continued discussions with key stakeholders to identify variables of interest for further analysis and strategic planning.
2. Planning for on-line PAYS administration October 8th and 9th for students in grades 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Using data from survey sources, in addition to diverse stakeholder input, continued review of priorities within the MHI moving forward.
2. Contract with an approved vendor authorized by administration 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).
3. Annual Safe2Say (S2S) on line training for grades 5th through 12th.