
Mental Health Matters: Improving access to care within Riverside School District

July – September 2023

October 16, 2023

Riverside School District
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Mental Health Matters

Third quarter: July through September 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). The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) STOP School Violence Grant for FY2022 that began in October focuses on school safety strategies for Riverside School District (RSD) that includes the onboarding of school support personnel to address mental health issues through strategies identified in the grant proposal.

On September 8, 2023, the quarterly reporting requirements for the STOP Grant were received, beginning first quarter October 2022 through funding termination. While this **Mental Health Matters** report will continue to highlight the action steps designed to improve access to mental health services within the district, and strategies to improve school climate, the Grant-submission requirements require the development of tracking mechanisms for current and future submissions by leadership that may include progress related to:

- (a) integration of the counseling 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. Three members of the counseling team completed the evidence-based 8-hour Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training in July, with final member enrolled Oct 2023.
2. Two LPCs have achieved train-the-trainer status to deliver the MHFA

curriculum to maximum of 25 staff/students/community members per training; and must complete three (3) trainings per year to maintain their certification received in September 2023.

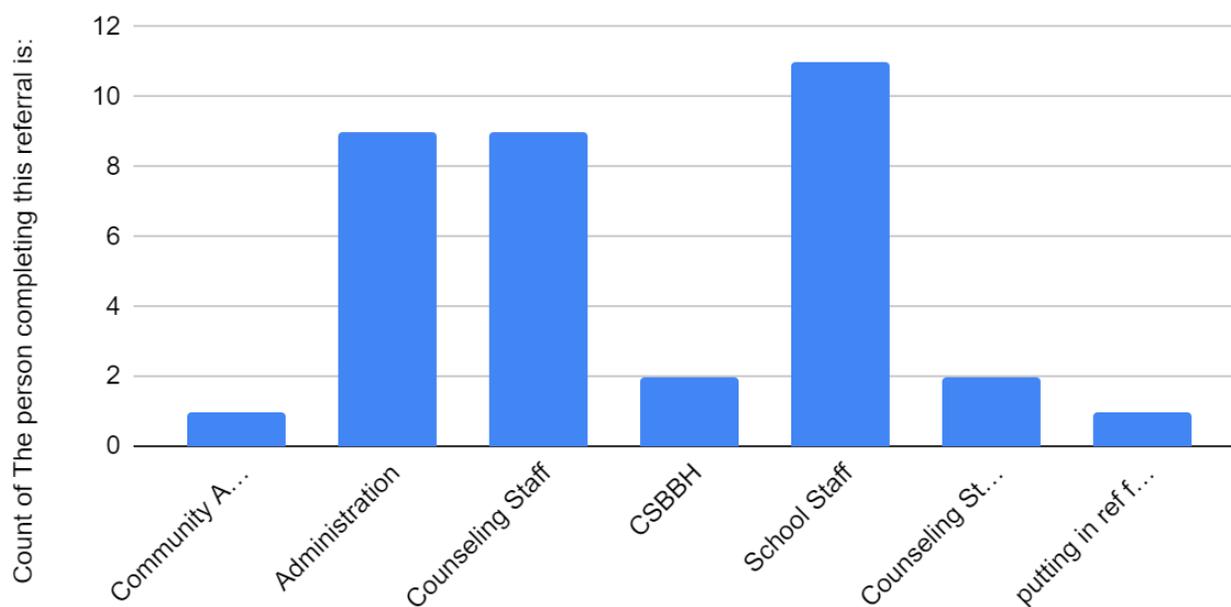
3. As routine referrals for mental health services are received they are assigned the most appropriate resource within the continuum (e.g. LPC, outpatient, CSBBH, etc.), and updates made within FOCUS. Urgent or emergency referrals are seen immediately. Reminder to all potential referral sources including link to “request for mental health services” distributed in September.
4. Communication pathways with LIU assures that Mr. Yarem is aware of active services being provided by that agency (outpatient or CSBBH).
5. Presented 60 minute Mental Health Awareness & Support Training on 8/1/2023 to 14 Fall-team coaches/athletic trainer/AD; and 4 additional team coaches 8/22/2023.
6. Hosted NSPI’s sponsorship of Dr. J. Spencer “Mind of the Athlete”, with 100+ in attendance from the Northeast area.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Dedicated time with staff, students, and community partners specified in the STOP grant for MHFA trainers to achieve goal of increased understanding and knowledge through training to identify students in grades 6-12 who are at risk of mental health problems, and of the trauma-informed approach to mitigate and respond to potential school violence incidences.
2. Target identified within the STOP grant for the 3-year Project period (10/1/2022 through 10/1/2025) is reduction by 10% of the number of referrals to outside agencies. Out Patient (OP) services provided by LIU18 were 130 during 2021/2022 school year; as of June 30, 2023, 102 students were active in OP services.
3. Leadership in all schools have identified/endorsed group activities to be led by LPCs this academic year, and are actively engaged identifying students for social skills groups, relationship/peer support, etc.
4. Coach Armstrong extended invitation for 8:00 am presentation to football team on 8/23/2023 to talk about mental health: overcoming the stigma associated with mental illness, how to identify students who are at risk of mental health concerns, trauma-informed approaches to mitigate and respond to concerns, etc.
5. Coach Shaughnessy requested dedicated time with Cheer Team on 9/26/2023 at 4:00 pm to cover similar topics as above.

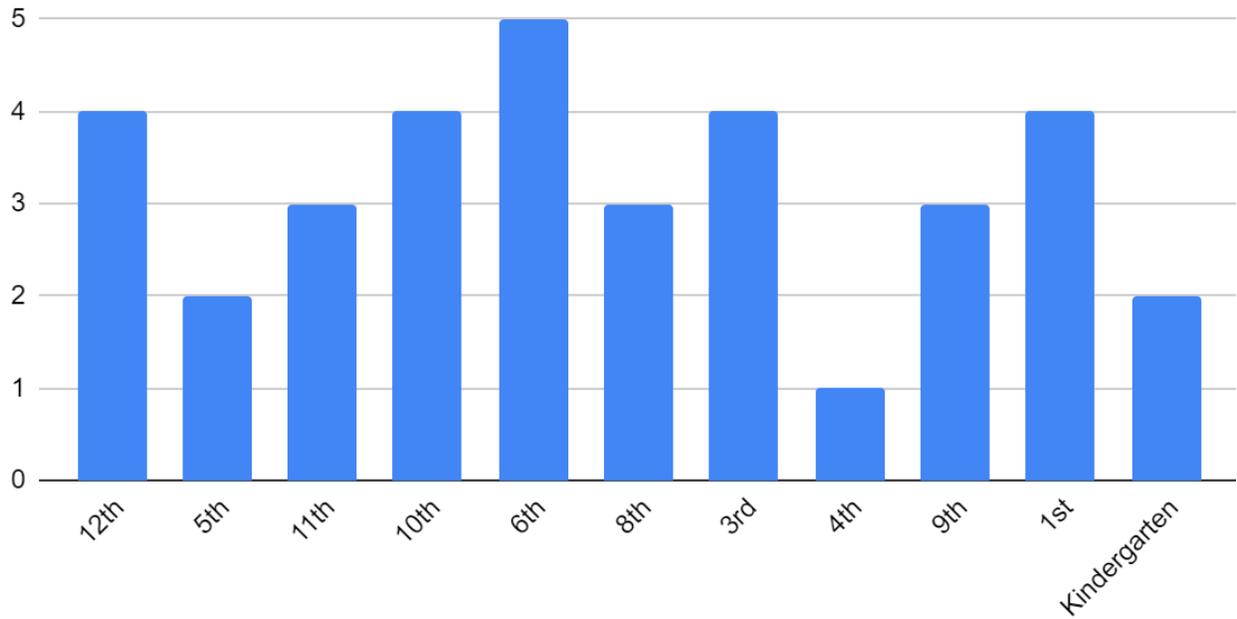
6. Three LPCs were expected to be enrolled with PA Medical Assistance to provide billable “Social Work and Counseling Services” under the School Based Access Program (SBAP) but in September the Director of Special Education advised that because federal dollars are funding the employment of the LPCs, this is not possible during the grant period. NBHCC/Community Care has not yet responded to our August appeal related to the LPCs becoming enrolled in the NE HealthChoices network, but it is expected that the denial will stand based upon the potential duplicative billing with federal resources.
7. Summary of referral data July through September 2023 follows noting referral source (35 total this qtr....last legend is “putting in referral for teacher”):

Count of The person completing this referral is:



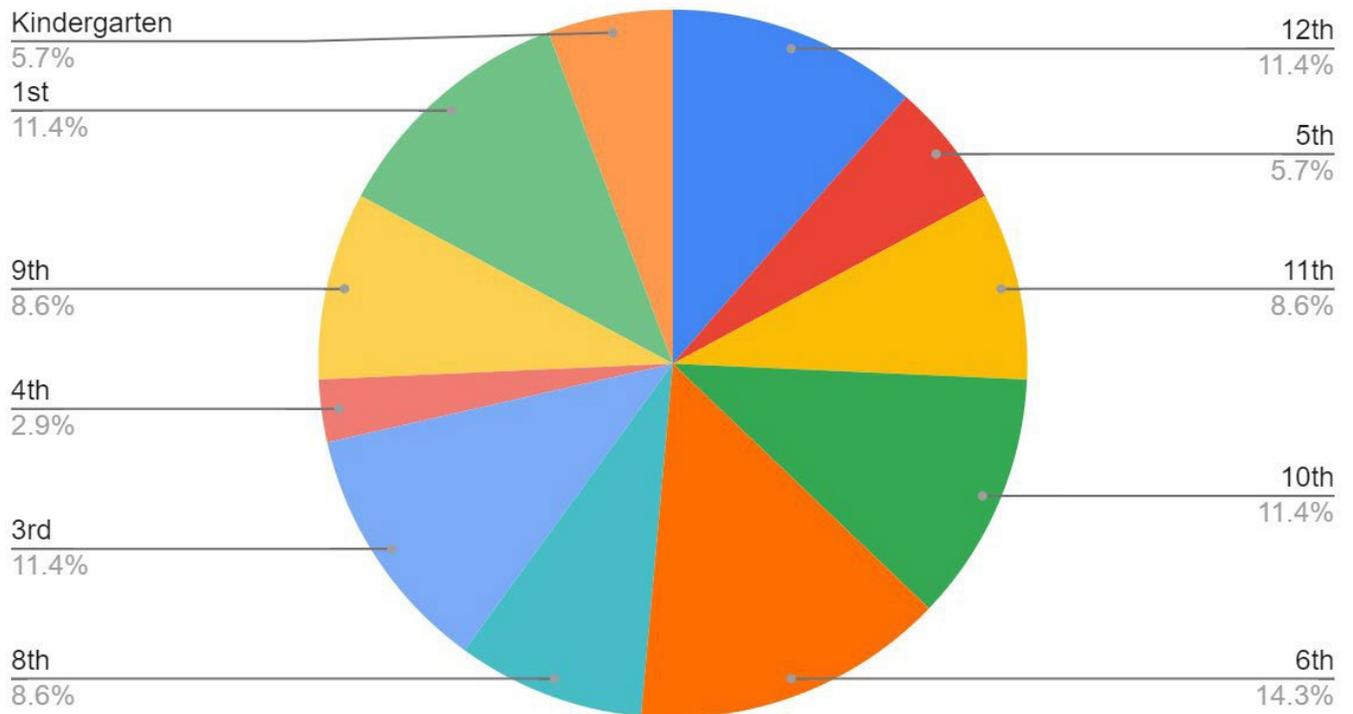
The person completing this referral is:

Count of Student's Grade



Count of Student's Grade

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. Completed 2-day training at NEIU 19 on September 27 and 28th as designated RSD flight team member trained in the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE school safety and crisis preparedness curriculum. Shared curriculum, including Tier 1, 2 &3 level interventions with leadership, along with reproducible resources.
2. Increasing district-wide efforts related to trauma informed/sensitive approaches, understanding its helpfulness in meeting the needs of students and staff.
3. Invited by Dean of Students/Attendance Officer to attend scheduled meetings at elementary and high school level beginning October 2023.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Crisis Response Procedures (2022/2023) disseminated and understood as finalized under Scott Pentasuglio's direction.
2. Electronic tool (Google doc) created to capture crisis assessments completed through partnership with Scranton Counseling Center, becoming operational in September.
3. Continuation of the Aavidum Club ("I've got your back") fall 2023 with students and staff active in NEIU-sponsored activities in October, identifying plans to spread the message of connection and support throughout the district through many activities.

Key Objective

(d) coordinating with local partners/agencies

Action Steps

1. Continued participation in monthly System of Care meetings within Lackawanna County led by Behavioral Health Coordinator from the Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention.
2. Continued participation in the Lackawanna County Suicide Prevention Alliance.
3. Continued participation with Northeast Suicide Prevention Initiative (NSPI).

Benchmarks of Success

1. Cheerleaders and trumpet students participated in the NSPI suicide prevention walk at McDade Park on September 23.

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) operational March 13-May 15, 2023 for staff, community members, and students in grades 3rd through 12th.
2. On line Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) 2023 will launch week of October 23 for grades 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th with C. Wydeen identified as test coordinator.

Benchmarks of Success

1. Achieved SCS identified goals of identifying community partners to complete survey (n=44), increasing response rates from all populations (920 vs 875 in 2019/2020) and gathering meaningful data for distribution and discussion with various stakeholders. Summary presentation to district leadership on Sept 14, then to School Board Oct 2, and high school staff on Oct 9, 2023.