



AUGENBLICK,
PALAICH AND
ASSOCIATES

HANDOUT G1



Student Mental Health

Jennifer Piscatelli, APA

Presentation to the Senate Committee on Education
and the House Committee on Education
Little Rock, Arkansas
September 29, 2020

Presentation Overview

- Highlights of April's Student Mental Health Presentation
- District survey results for how districts and charter systems currently address student mental health needs

Review of Prior Student Mental Health Presentation

- In our April presentation, the study team addressed:
 - What need exists for student mental health support?
 - What does current staffing for student support personnel look like nationally?
 - Considering best practices:
 - What national approaches and staffing recommendations are available?
 - What are other states doing to provide student mental health services?

Key Highlights from Prior Presentation

- Arkansas currently provides 2.5 counselors/nurses per 500 students in the funding matrix
- Arkansas' Standards for Accreditation require that each school district has a student/guidance counselor ratio of no more than 450:1
- According to 2017-18 NCES data, the average counselor staffing ratio in Arkansas is 385:1, which is lower than the average of 407:1 for SREB states + Massachusetts
- There are several national approaches/models to address student mental health needs, many of which are focused on providing tiered, whole child support to students
 - Mental health services for all students, with additional service provided by highly trained specialists (social workers, psychologists, or behavior specialists) for students with additional needs

Key Highlights, Continued

- Recommended School Mental Health Professional Ratios:
 - The American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
 - 250:1 school counselor to student ratio
 - The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
 - 250:1 for school counselors, 500-700:1 for school psychologists, and 400:1 for school social workers
 - The National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
 - 250:1 for school social workers, unless working with students with intensive needs, when a lower ratio is required

District Survey Responses

- The study team asked districts and charter systems how they currently address student mental health needs using a series of questions on strategies employed for the following student groups:
 - Low Need/Tier 1 (all students)
 - Moderate Need/Tier 2
 - High Need/Tier 3
- For all questions, the study team examined if there was any variation based upon district size, need, or locale

Survey Responses: Low Need/Tier 1 (all students)

- Strategies most commonly identified for all students:
 - Counselor-led classroom sessions (76%)
 - Addressed during instructional classes (69%)
 - Addressed during advisement/mentoring periods (59%)
 - Small group/team that reviews student needs and develops plans to address (41%)
 - Small group meetings with counselors (pull out) (41%)

Survey Responses: Moderate Need/Tier 2

- Strategies most commonly identified for Tier 2 students:
 - One-on-one meetings with counselors (59%)
 - Small group meetings with counselors (pull out), (54%)
 - Small group/team that reviews student needs and develops plans to address (49%)
 - Assessment of individual student mental health needs (47%)
 - Outside agency provides therapy onsite (44%)
 - District- or system-employed therapists provide services on site (38%)

Survey Responses: High Need/Tier 3

- Strategies most identified for Tier 3 students:
 - Outside agency provides therapy onsite (65%)
 - Assessment of individual student mental health needs (39%)
 - One-on-one meetings with counselors (39%)
 - District- or system-employed therapists provide services on site (38%)

Survey Responses: Lesser Utilized Strategies

Strategy	Low Need/ Tier 1 (All Students)	Moderate Need/ Tier 2	High Need/ Tier 3
District- or system-employed therapists provide services on site	18%	-	-
Specialists through Education Cooperatives	22%	28%	30%
Specific curriculum	18%	6%	4%
Specific framework/model	14%	6%	5%

Survey Responses: Variation by District Need or Size

- **Accessing specialists through Education Cooperatives**
 - Larger districts report less use of specialists through the Co-ops for their Tier 1 students (28% of the smallest districts, compared to 11% of the largest districts)
 - Districts with higher concentrations of poverty were more likely to access specialists through the Co-ops (26%) than more affluent districts (12%) to serve their Tier 1 students

Survey Responses: Variation by District Need or Size

- **Counselor-led classroom sessions**
 - The higher the need of the district (by FRL concentration), the fewer districts reported having counselor-led classroom sessions *for all students*, from about 60% of districts in the lowest two quintiles, to 49% in the highest need quintile
 - As overall district need increased, the more likely a district was to report counselor-led classroom sessions *for Tier 2 students*, from 6% in the lowest need quintile, to 25% in the highest need quintile
 - There was not much variation based on the size of the district

Survey Responses: Variation by District Need or Size

- **Outside agency provides therapy on site**
 - These services are provided most often to *high need/Tier 3* students
 - Districts with higher need/more economically disadvantaged students reported utilizing outside agencies for Tier 3 students at higher rates than more affluent districts, with rates from 38-48% in the bottom three quintiles, while 59-60% of districts in the two highest need quintiles reported the use of outside agencies
 - There was little variation in the use of outside agencies based on the size of the district

Survey Responses: Variation by District Need or Size

- **District- or system-employed therapist provides services on site**
 - These services are provided most often to *Tier 2 and Tier 3* students
 - Larger districts were more likely to report the use of in-house therapists than smaller districts. For *Tier 3* students, only 17% of the smallest districts reported services by district-employed therapists, compared to 39% and 31% of the two largest district quintiles

Survey Responses: Open Ended Responses

- 46 respondents shared additional feedback on the topic of student mental health – common themes included:
 - Districts are seeing an overall increase in the need for student mental health supports
 - Partnership with outside agencies help, but billing/payment limitations, turnover in agency staff/therapists, and family willingness to allow participation with outside agencies can be a concern
 - Additional funding dedicated to in-district mental health professionals is needed



Questions?