

PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS PLAN

2020-2021 School Year



For the past two years we have implemented a multifaceted approach to ensuring mental health and wellness for all students in Pinellas County schools. For the 2020-2021 school year we are expanding this plan to further ensure safety and wellness for all students. The components of this plan include:

- Mental Health and Wellness Training
- Increase Access to Student Services Staff
- Strengthen Community Partnerships
- Suicide Prevention
- Substance Abuse Prevention/Intervention
- Response to Covid-19
- Screening and Assessments of At-risk Students

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRAINING:

Youth mental health training and awareness remains a priority for Pinellas County Schools (PCS). The district has increased the number of Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) trainers. We continue to train staff regularly, therefore increasing our overall number of First Aiders. This year, we have strengthened our collaboration with community members and committed to increase our YMHFA trainings to including The City of St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Staff, The City of St. Petersburg Library Staff, and Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital Employees. Mental health awareness and intervention is the responsibility of all stakeholders and, therefore, the district will continue to put an emphasis on this collaboration to ensure those working with youth have the proper skills to identify students in crisis and seek the appropriate help.

This summer we once again offered the Mental Health Summer Training Institute which focused on mental health and wellness, bullying and violence prevention, creating a safe environment for LGBTQ students, trauma-informed care, and creating a trauma-sensitive classroom. Due to the overwhelming positive response of last year's summer institute, we increased the amount of training days to four days. The goal of this professional development institute is to increase staff's awareness of trauma and understand the impact trauma has on the student and community; recognize protective and risk factors; and identify students in distress and refer for assistance and support.

The district has currently developed a Mental Health Micro-Credential specific to youth mental health and wellness that staff can achieve by attending specific trainings, completing activities, and submitting a final project. Staff will have to continue to attend yearly trainings and complete additional coursework to maintain the mental health micro-credential. All schools, including those charter schools who have opted into the districts mental health plan will continue to review and revise their Mental Health and Wellness Planning Rubric. This rubric is submitted yearly as a guide to assist Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) teams in the development and implementation of a comprehensive, professional development plan. These plans are reviewed by the Prevention Office and individualized feedback and implementation strategies are provided. The Mental Health and Wellness Planning Rubric is used as a roadmap for schools to appropriately identify the specific areas of support to help build relationships, increase student

engagement, and help improve the physical and emotional safety of students which will ultimately create a more connected school environment and community.

Pinellas County Schools, including those charter schools that opted in to our mental health plan and Sandy Hook Promise, continue to maintain a strong partnership centered around preventing school violence. Pinellas has been recognized nationally by Sandy Hook Promise as a model district for high-quality implementation of programming including Start with Hello which focuses on eliminating social isolation while creating an inclusive community. This school year, we have begun a strong emphasis on program sustainability with the implementation of SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) Promise Clubs. Pinellas County Schools currently utilizes the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System which allows individuals to report acts of violence, risk of harm to self or others, or any other incident of concern. Middle and high school students were trained by a team of prevention specialists on how to identify warning signs, how to report an incident, and the importance of reporting. Every school in Pinellas County, including charter schools, identified a site-based team to address the incoming tips, and 100% of school teams were trained on the appropriate ways to utilize the system. This year we have responded to over 2400 tips. A district Mental Health Counselor will be added to support the implementation of some of the aforementioned trainings as well as a variety of other interventions provided by Student Services to students. This position will focus on strengthening and streamlining Tier 1 interventions and supports across all elementary schools and charter schools that have opted into the PCS Mental Health plan.

INCREASE ACCESS TO STUDENT SERVICES STAFF:

PCS Student Services employs Department of Education (DOE) certified school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers (many of whom are also licensed mental health counselors, licensed school psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers through the Department of Health) as school-based mental health professionals. Additional DOE-certified school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers will be hired to reduce the ratio of students to staff in order to better align to the national recommended ratio models. The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 1 school counselor for every 250 students. The School Social Worker Association of America recommends a ratio of 1 school social worker for every 250 students. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 500-700 students.

Our ratios apart from the mental health allocation are as follows:

1 : 440	1 : 1224	1 : 889
School Counselors	School Psychologists	School Social Workers

Our ratios including the mental health allocation will be:

1 : 434	1 : 1089	1 : 780
School Counselors	School Psychologists	School Social Workers

As we utilize this funding to increase DOE-certified staff, we also have taken steps to increase the time all Student Services personnel spend providing direct mental health services to students. The strategic changes include: freeing up school psychologists from time spent on testing by contracting with them to do gifted testing beyond the regular work day, allowing them to spend additional time providing mental health supports to children; providing school psychologists an additional half hour in their work day to allow them to focus more on direct service during student hours; assigning a full-time social worker to every high school; training behavior specialists to facilitate Functional Behavior Assessments and Positive Behavior Intervention Plans; encouraging schools to no longer use counselors as Testing Coordinators, Tier 3 Coordinators, or to perform other clerical duties; and conducting focus groups with Student Services staff to gather their input on strategies that would allow them more time with students.

In addition to the mental health assistance allocation, PCS will utilize funds obtained through Medicaid and other available third-party billing and grant funding to pay for the Student Services positions. Increasing these mental health providers in schools will allow for the provision of a more comprehensive service delivery model with a full range of services across Tier 2 and Tier 3. Staff will be assigned based on formulas to include data points that help anticipate the risk levels of a school's student population. All the staff hired will be Florida DOE-certified in their discipline. Their role includes delivering evidence-based mental health services including assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery. These include but are not limited to: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS); Social Emotional Learning; Restorative Practices; Individual & Group Counseling; Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems (MATCH-ADTC); PREPaRE Crisis Response; Safe and Civil Schools Classroom Management (CHAMPS); Olweus Bullying Prevention; Trauma-Informed Care; Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHA); FACE IT for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs; Jason Foundation Suicide Prevention; Check and Connect; and Culturally Relevant Teaching. These staff also support school and district-based threat assessments and are responsible to complete the Mental Health Assessment component when required. In addition, these school-based mental health professionals conduct the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale for students when there are concerns for risk of suicide and provide appropriate referrals, follow-up, and monitoring.

Student Services staff continue to be committed to our partnership with our local charter schools, and we're pleased that all but one small charter school has chosen to participate in our plan. Every charter school choosing to opt into the district plan will have access to these services and trainings as well as crisis intervention and mental health supports as needed. Charter school students are part of Pinellas County Schools and we want to ensure that all students receive services including those who attend charter schools in our community. PCS has a rigorous Summer Bridge program and students who attend Summer Bridge will continue to present with mental health needs during that time. Principals often report needing assistance during Summer Bridge that has not been readily available. For this reason, we will fund counselors to address the students' mental health concerns throughout the summer.

Student Services has its own data management system, Student Services Wide Information Management System (SSWIMS), that identifies assessments and services provided to students

across a Multi-Tiered System of Supports. SSWIMS identifies the number of students and services provided as well as the credentials of mental health service providers. Student-related outcomes and the impact on learning will be evaluated utilizing data from SSWIMS and early warning systems.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnering with community mental health, substance abuse and social service agencies for collaboration with provision of services in the community and in schools is a priority for PCS. For decades the district has enjoyed excellent working relationships with a variety of community partners. The established processes that include obtaining parent consent for sharing of student information, and referrals to community providers and primary caregivers, including Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, has proven to be an effective intervention for many families. In several school locations where access to these services can be difficult, there are providers on campus to reduce the barrier. PCS will continue to expand these partnerships and the services they provide to students. Pinellas County School District will incur expenditures for services provided by contract-based collaborative efforts and partnerships with community-based mental health program agencies and providers. In particular, we will continue partnerships with Directions for Living and a program called Treatment Works. Treatment Works is an intensive, therapy services program model to all students served by the Pinellas County School system and any charter school that has opted into the PCS Mental Health Plan who have been identified via the Pinellas County School System's District Threat Assessment Team to be in need of intensive mental health and co-occurring substance abuse services. Services will principally be provided in far less than 30 days in the family home and, when appropriate, to strengthen and assist the family in other natural environments such as schools, family-friendly parks, home of support system (family and friends), neighborhood community centers, and places of worship. Services include case management and counseling that can occur every day when needed. Each family participates in an interdisciplinary team staffing meeting every 15 days during their participation in the program at which PCS staff are in attendance. We have also begun to pilot the program at the elementary level to provide early intervention with at-risk students prior to significant threats. The District has contracted with Suncoast Center for Community Mental Health to have Licensed Mental Health Therapists on school campuses that are referred by school staff and seen in far less than 30 days. These services target emotional and behavioral issues, whether individual, family, or system-related, which impede the youth's emotional availability for learning. Therapy seeks to resolve issues and to build upon successful coping skills to support school success and social success for the youth and their families including trauma-informed treatment.

Personal Enrichment Through Mental Health Services (PEMHS) is another community partner that we will continue to contract with for System Navigators. In addition, working with the family to strengthen developed education partnerships with the school for consistent and improved collaborations between home and school; behavioral plans, medication when indicated, parent conference attendance, and reinforced in-school interventions. Navigators will strengthen the bridge between school and home for both the family and the school personnel. The navigator will work to alleviate basic domains of needs when indicated housing, transportation, child care, food, employment, etc., that are referred by school staff and seen in far less than 30 days.

PCS is a partner in a community collaborative Children's Mental Health Initiative along with multiple other agencies and entities such as the Juvenile Welfare Board, Community Health Centers of Pinellas, community mental health agencies, the Department of Health, The University of South Florida and others. This initiative is focused on increasing children's access to mental health services through their primary health care providers. Communication between the district and agencies has increased as the district staff participate in weekly meetings in which specific student needs are discussed with physicians and community health providers. In addition, this work has resulted in system changes that improve services to students and families.

SUICIDE PREVENTION:

As part of professional development, PCS staff are required to complete the Kognito online training. In addition, staff can choose to take YMHFA training and the Jason Foundation online suicide prevention course. PCS has adopted the use of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) as a screener when a student voices suicidal ideation. The school counselors, school social worker, and school psychologists have been trained in using the C-SSRS.

PCS has a Baker Act Specialist whose full-time job is to monitor and coordinate the response and follow-up of students who voice suicidal ideations. PCS employs over 60 Licensed Clinical Social Workers. The Baker Act Specialist receives calls during school hours and works with school administrators and Student Services staff to triage and address the need for assessment of Baker Act criteria. When a concern arises, the Student Services personnel (school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker) completes a Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale prior to calling the Baker Act Specialist. If warranted, the Baker Act Specialist or LCSW on call goes to the school where the student of concern is and completes a Baker Act assessment. If the student meets criteria, the caregiver is notified and law enforcement is called to transport. If the student does not meet criteria, the caregiver is notified. Whether or not the student meets criteria for a Baker Act, Student Services personnel follow up with the student and family for further support and referral to mental health resources.

The partnership with Sandy Hook Promise, See Something Say Something Anonymous Reporting System described earlier includes response to students expressing possible suicide ideation. If anyone has such a concern, they can submit a tip to the SS-ARS. Once a tip is submitted, it is received by a crisis hotline and two-way dialogue begins between the tipster and the crisis counselor. If there is a threat of suicide outside of school hours, the crisis center notifies PCS Police dispatch and law enforcement is deployed on a welfare check.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION/INTERVENTION:

PCS, through the Prevention Office provides education and awareness of substance use and abuse to promote health and wellness for all students. Prevention Office staff provides Substance Abuse awareness professional development to district and school-based staff and are available for consultation when requested. A comprehensive resource library with curriculum and materials (online and hard copies) are available to schools, families and students in efforts to promote awareness and prevention. Prevention efforts across the district and community

include: PTA meetings, student assemblies, school-based and community-wide health and wellness fairs, and the participations in events like Red Ribbon Week and Kick Butts Day Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

PCS has many longstanding collaborative partnerships within the community to address substance abuse. These community-based advisory and advocacy groups include the Tobacco Coalition, Substance Abuse Advisory Board, Suncoast Safety Council, Opioid Task Force and Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Education (NOPE). These groups support the district's initiatives centered around substance abuse awareness. Students with substance abuse disorders, those with co-occurring disorders or students in need of more intensive substance abuse interventions will be referred to community-based substance abuse providers (Operation Par, Suncoast, and Juvenile Arbitration RISE).

This year PCS was awarded the School Climate Transformation Grant which has an emphasis on preventing substance abuse. PCS now has a LiveFree! Club in every middle and high school to reduce youth substance abuse by creating a safe and healthy community focused on public awareness, advocacy, education and healthy solutions. Each school has an identified school-based club sponsor to support these student-led clubs with their implementation plan. Livefree! Clubs encourage students to live a substance-free, healthy lifestyle and create positive change. The club takes on a holistic role, knowing that other topics such as mental health and bullying correlate with drug and alcohol use and are important topics to address as well. All substance abuse prevention and intervention strategies are accessible to charter schools who have opted in to our mental health plan.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19:

At the end of March Pinellas County Schools, like districts across the nation, had to move all learning and services to a virtual platform due to Covid-19. All of the services describe in this plan continued to be provided with very little interruption either by moving to online or by going into family's homes. This includes all of the community partnership programs, counseling services, crisis and suicide intervention, screening and assessments of students, etc. The summer mental health training institute originally scheduled as a full, four-day, in-person training moved to a virtual platform and all staff enrolled received all trainings as originally planned. PCS Student Services staff developed several virtual lessons for students titled, "Coping with Covid-19 Through Connections" that were not only available to all our students K-12th grade but were shared with other districts across the state for their use as well. Districts have seen an ever-rising increase in need for mental health and wellness services as a result of Covid-19, and Pinellas is continuing to respond and partner with other districts state wide. A guide titled, "Considerations for Re-Opening Schools" was developed by Pinellas County's Student Services Leadership Team in collaboration with Seminole County's Student Services Leadership Team for distribution through the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS). This document leads districts through the many facets of addressing mental health and wellness while planning to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Whatever challenges await us in the school year ahead will be addressed with the priority of keeping our students safe and mentally well.

SCREENING AND ASSESSMENTS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS:

Early Warning Systems (EWS) data are the foundation of the screening and identification of symptoms of student mental health concerns. Each school has an identified School-Based Leadership Team (SBLT) and Child Study Team (CST) who regularly review early warning indicators related to academic performance (grades, grade point average, credits, retentions) and behavioral functioning (attendance, referrals, in school suspension, out of school suspension) using a problem-solving process. Identified problems are analyzed to determine if they are impacting most, some, or few students and intervention plans are developed accordingly to address the scope of the concern. Students identified for intensive (Tier 3) interventions are further assessed through record review, interview, observation, and, when necessary, direct testing and functional behavior assessment to inform the design of individual intervention plans. Parents/guardians are proactively informed of these potential screening and assessment procedures at the Tier 3 level and provided opportunities to voice any questions or concerns. Another key source of screening and assessment data is the ongoing progress monitoring that accompanies any intervention plan. When such intervention plans are designed, a progress monitoring tool is identified. The ongoing progress monitoring data collected provides a source of formative assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions during implementation and to recycle through the steps of problem-solving when necessary.

When implemented consistently and with fidelity, such structures and systems allow school teams to lead in the screening and early identification of concerns and to implement early interventions to support students. However, all schools are also equipped and prepared to respond to direct teacher and parent referrals for mental health concerns, and to engage in similar screening, assessment, intervention and monitoring procedures, grounded in a data-based, problem-solving process as described above. As staff and families are trained in Trauma-Informed Care, there is an increase in the identification and referral of students impacted by trauma including violence. These students are referred for services and support through the SBLT and CST. Several of our schools have developed a significant trauma focus with a goal of building trauma-sensitive schools and, eventually, an entirely trauma-sensitive school district.

Whether a student is referred by the SBLT, CST, teacher, or parent, the screening, assessment, community referral, and/or service delivery responses of school staff are documented in the Student Services Wide Information Management System (SSWIMS) and Focus/Student Information System (Focus). These systems are used for tracking the number of students at high risk for mental health or co-occurring substance abuse disorders who received mental health screenings or assessments; the number of students referred to school-based mental health services providers; the number of students referred to community-based mental health services providers; the number of students who received school-based interventions, services or assistance; and the number of students who received community-based interventions, services or assistance.

Students referred for concerns are regularly monitored by the SBLT and/or CST, ensuring that screenings occur within 15 days of referral. School-based services are initiated within 15 days of identification and assessment, and community-based services are initiated within 30 days. Specific populations of students referred for acute concerns are monitored even more closely.

For example, students that are referred due to a concern for targeted threat of violence are assessed within 24 hours with unique documentation of the screening/assessment procedures as well as any school-based services or community referrals that are established based on the assessment results. Such cases engage the school-based threat assessment team and may, depending on the severity of the concern, rise to the level of the district threat assessment team. All threat assessments are regularly monitored by the district threat assessment team for adherence to expected timelines for response and for fidelity of implementation of processes, ensuring that screenings occur within 15 days of referral, school-based services are initiated within 15 days of identification and assessment, and community-based services are initiated within 30 days.

Additionally, as previously described, the district has a robust system in place to respond to referrals due to a concern for suicide. The school-based Columbia screener, referral to district Baker Act Specialist, assessment by licensed clinical staff, and any school-based services or community referrals that are established based on the assessment results are expected to occur within 24 hours of such a referral. All screenings and assessments for concerns of suicide are regularly monitored by the district Baker Act Specialist for adherence to expected timelines for response and for fidelity of implementation of processes, ensuring that screenings occur within 15 days of referral, school-based services are initiated within 15 days of identification and assessment, and community-based services are initiated within 30 days.

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE ALLOCATION 2020-2021

DESCRIPTIONS	UNITS	FUNDING
ESTIMATED REVENUE		
Mental Health Assistance- FEFP		\$3,292,497
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUE		\$3,292,497
APPROPRIATIONS		
DOE-Certified School Psychologists	9.00	685,092
DOE-Certified School Social Workers	15.50	1,111,115
Prevention Dept. DOE-Certified School Social Workers	2.00	143,370
Prevention Dept. DOE-Certified School Psychologist	1.00	76,121
Prevention Dept. DOE-Certified School Counselors	2.00	168,376
Support Coordination Staff	1.25	62,169
DOE-Certified School Counselor- Districtwide MH support	1.00	81,146
DOE-Certified School Counselors- Summer Bridge		112,000
Threat Assessment Admin assessing MH services	0.25	28,334
Community Partnerships (Mental Health & Substance Abuse)		821,750
Charter Allocation (1 charter opting out)		3,025
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS	32.00	\$3,292,497


An amount of \$100,000,000 was appropriated statewide for mental health assistance for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. This allocation provides funding to assist school districts in establishing or expanding school-based mental health care; train educators and other school staff in detecting and responding to mental health issues; and connect children, youth, and families who may experience behavioral health issues with appropriate services. Each district receives a minimum of \$100,000 with the remaining balance allocated on each district's share of unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment. Prior to receiving funds, plans outlining the local program and planned expenditures must be approved by district school boards and be submitted to the Commissioner of Education by August 1st of each fiscal year. This plan must include all district schools, including charter schools, unless a charter school elects to submit a plan independently from the school district.

The 2020-2021 Annual Mental Health Allocation plan is hereby approved by the School Board of Pinellas County.

Dated the 28th day of July 2020

Attest:

The School Board of Pinellas County, Florida

 7/28/2020

Michael A. Grego, Ed.D.
Superintendent



Chairperson

Approved As To Form:



School Board Attorneys Office