

# **Section 1 -- Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan for Walton County School District (WCSD)**

## **Introduction**

Walton County School District (WCSD) has developed a comprehensive and integrated multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) utilizing the MTSS process to provide all students with the supports necessary for success at school. MTSS will also help to improve school safety and mental health services for students with co-occurring mental health or substance abuse diagnoses and for students determined to be at-risk of such diagnoses by initiating the process to identify, assess, treat and facilitate recovery. WCSD will implement the components described below with fidelity in order to meet those goals and to build capacity at all schools (including charter schools) within Walton county.

### **Focus on delivering evidence-based mental health services**

WCSD currently utilizes an integrated and collaborative framework of MTSS and school leadership teams to facilitate and coordinate a multi-tiered system of mental health services and interventions. All WCSD school staff will be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) by the conclusion of school year 2019-20. This training is designed to help identify and understand the signs of emotional disturbance, mental illness, and substance abuse disorders. The training program will also provide personnel with the skills to assist students who are developing or experiencing an emotional disturbance, mental health or co-occurring substance use problem. WCSD has trained 14 staff members as YMHFA trainers who in turn have trained guidance counselors, administrative staff, school-based assessment team members, and selected school and district personnel. More than 275 WCSD staff have been trained during the 2018-19 school year. Staff training will continue until all WCSD staff have been trained in YMHFA.

In addition, WCSD will contract with outside community-based agencies to train psychological services personnel (school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses and school mental health counselors) in evidence-based trauma informed treatments which may include, but not limited to, Trauma Informed Care school-supports and CBT for anxiety reduction and symptoms of depression. Suicide prevention programs such as Connect Program, Jason Foundation Professional Development Series, and Signs Matter are a few the resources utilized to help recognize and prevent school-age suicide. WCSD will continue to provide training and support related to issues of Executive Functioning and the regulation of behavior. Strategies and techniques will be provided through trainings and workshops for all appropriate staff. School-wide social-emotional learning programs and curriculum have been implemented to develop and enhance resiliency and protective factors among students. Ongoing efforts to increase the number of schools trained in Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) will continue in order to build capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support. WCSD will utilize its Early Warning System (EWS) to identify students in need of support services and to monitor the response and progress of those support services.

Additionally, WCSD will collaborate with wrap-around service providers to evaluate the effectiveness of intensive interventions.

WCSD currently employs 3 licensed school psychologists, 2 licensed mental health counselors, 3 licensed clinical social workers, 16 certified guidance counselors and one contracted licensed school psychologist for a total 25 mental health professionals. Based on total enrollment of approximately 10,000 students, a ratio of 400:1 students/mental health provider exists. This ratio should allow for the identification and provision of services to students in need or at-risk for developing mental health issues.

Guidance counselors, school psychologists and mental health counselors will be trained in Suicide Prevention and Brief Therapies for school issues including, but not limited to: CBT, Solution-Focused Therapy & Motivational Interviewing to address issues related to anxiety, depression, NSSI behaviors, aggression, dysregulation, executive functioning, substance abuse and social withdrawal. In order to provide more time for guidance support to free counselors to work directly with students, WCSD will hire retired staff to complete typical guidance counselor duties. This process began during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of school year 2018-19 with success. The intention in school year 2019-20 is to expand the pool of available retired staff to match the need of guidance counselors and students. This use of retired staff will allow guidance counselors to have a significant increase in direct contact with students.

WCSD has an interagency agreement with Chautauqua Healthcare and Pancare of Florida to provide support services to students and families in Walton county. The Community Action Team (CAT) and Mobile Response Team (MRT) assist in screening, assessment and counseling of students. WCSD personnel and CAT team members meet to discuss student needs and follow up on care plans. Additionally, WCSD staff meets weekly with the sheriff's department's investigative unit regarding cases of concern to help integrate school and community resources.

### **Referral Process**

Based on current legislative action (SB 7030), the referral process for students identified with one or more co-occurring mental health or substance abuse diagnoses and for students at-risk for developing such diagnoses will be the following: The school-based MTSS continuous improvement process and school-based threat assessment teams can refer any student for mental health services. School-based teams will meet at least monthly to review EWS data and monitor the progress of on-going interventions. Referrals for additional services may result from the monthly meetings. Students who exhibit aggressive and/or highly disruptive behavior will be referred for mental health services as required by the Code of Conduct. Students who make threats of violence will be assessed through the Virginia model of Threat Assessment.

Referrals from the school-based teams for mental health assessment pertaining to a student identified and/or a student potentially at-risk for mental health disorders **must** take place within **15** days of the referral. School-based mental health services as the result of identification and assessment of said referral must be **initiated** within **15** days following identification of need. Students referred to community based mental health services must be **initiated** within **30** days of referral. WCSD has community-based partners including Community Action Team (CAT),

Pancare of Florida and Chautauqua Healthcare to assist in this process. Approval of this plan constitutes a School Board of Walton County action. All schools (including charters) will be covered in this allocation plan. Charter schools are included in all in-service meetings regarding the MTSS process including the referral for mental health services and agree to follow WCSD practices and policies regarding this process.

**Describes process for coordinating mental health services with a student’s primary care provider and other mental health providers, including procedures for information sharing.**

WCSD will develop MOUs and Cooperative agreements that allow for collaboration and data sharing with primary care providers. The release of information signed by parent will allow collaboration between parties by utilizing DOE provided documents/guidance.

**Early Intervention**

WCSD will utilize its MTSS format to identify, assess, provide referrals for services and provide intervention supports and services to identified students in order to reduce the likelihood of the development of mental health issues across all grade levels and tiers.

Core instruction at all grade levels will be infused with age and developmentally appropriate activities which support mental health, understanding and intentional practice opportunities to develop protective factors. Elementary schools will utilize Sanford Harmony as a vehicle for daily mental health moments. Secondary schools will provide the required 5 hour mental health curriculum and have scheduled small group activities to promote wellness and mental health initiatives.

**Multi-Tiered System of Supports**

**Tier 1:** At the core instructional level, students will be exposed to and instructed in a variety of social skills curriculum and mental health awareness programs including, but not limited to: PBIS, Suite 360 (social-emotional curriculum), Sanford Harmony, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Trauma-Informed Care, Bullying prevention campaigns, Capturing Kids Hearts, CDAC, EWS and progress monitoring. These tools will provide students, families and staff with mental health attitudes, competencies and wellness through professional development. Core instruction at all grade levels will be infused with age and developmentally appropriate activities which support mental health, understanding and intentional practice opportunities to develop protective factors. Elementary schools will utilize Sanford Harmony as a vehicle for daily mental health moments. Secondary schools will provide the required 5 hour mental health curriculum and have scheduled small group activities to promote wellness and mental health initiatives.

Screening and Assessment: WCSD will initiate the screening of all students identified by the specially created at-risk Early Warning System (EWS). WCSD anticipates that between 10-20% of all students may be identified through the EWS initiative. WCSD will utilize a standardized tool(s) such as: BASC3, Conner’s Comprehensive Behavior Rating Scale, Beck’s Youth Inventory, GAD, Youth Internalizing Problems Screener, Youth Externalizing Problems

Screeners as a screening tool to measure children's adaptive and/or problem behaviors in school and community settings across prek-high school age groups. Trauma-Sensitive Schools will inform the process at all levels of support. Students with trauma and/or experiences with violence should be identified and receive appropriate supports as quickly as possible. School cultures should also reflect sensitivity to these issues.

Prevention: A variety of age-appropriate tools will be utilized at Tier1. They include, but are not limited to, Sanford Harmony, Stop and Think, Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving, Second Steps, Ripple Effects and CASEL.

**Tier2** interventions will focus on targeted instruction based on presenting problems (see EWS identifiers). Small group instruction might involve Smarts for issues associated with executive functioning, role-playing utilizing any of the materials mentioned above and/or specific tools designed for anxiety, depression, suicide prevention and/or peer relationship difficulties.

**Tier3** interventions will involve additional (Tier2 plus Tier3) direct intensive instruction/counseling services by school psychologists, mental health counselors or outside agency/physician referrals. WCSD will utilize the materials provided by DOE in A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools for referrals to outside providers for mental health services; to locate available resources for school-based problem-solving; cultural and linguistic considerations and other resources. Community and family involvement in the problem-solving process is critical to Tier3 interventions.

By following the multi-tiered system of supports across all grade levels and schools, students will receive appropriate early intervention supports across a wide spectrum of mental health issues. Students with the greatest needs will receive the necessary support at school or through community-based supports.

## **Expenditures and Assurances**

One hundred percent of allocation funds will be spent on providing licensed mental health providers for direct student contact. Currently, the funds are used to employ 2 licensed mental health counselors and 2 licensed clinical social workers (approximately \$ 200,000) to provide direct mental health services and/or assessment to students. Additionally, one licensed school psychologist (approximately \$15,000) is contracted to provide assessment for at-risk students suspected of developing mental health issues. A portion of the allocation funds (approximately \$10,000) will be set aside in order to compensate for any community referrals that require reimbursement. Any remaining funds will be spent for training in the recognition and intervention related to mental health issues.

No allocation funds are used to supplant other funds or to increase salaries or provide bonus money. WCSD will utilize Medicaid reimbursement funds and Title IV funds to help provide school-based mental health services and materials as needed.

## **Program Implementation and Outcomes**

WCSD currently employs 3 licensed school psychologists, 2 licensed mental health counselors, 3 licensed clinical social workers, 16 certified guidance counselors, one contracted licensed school psychologist for a total 25 mental health professionals. Based on total enrollment of approximately 10,000 students, a ratio of 400:1 students/mental health provider currently exists. This ratio should allow for the identification and/or services to students in need of counseling or at-risk for developing mental health issues.

WCSD has created a system in its MIS system designed to identify students at-risk for mental health services utilizing information from screening and assessments resulting from the MTSS referral process. The MTSS process includes referrals from parents and/or staff members as well as the modified EWS “at-risk” report. A separate data base has been created to log threat assessments, Baker Acts and other high-risk behaviors, referrals for services and treatment/safety plans. Each school has its own tab to enter data on an ongoing basis regarding referrals for assessment, counseling, threat assessments, referrals to outside providers, Baker Acts and/or other issues of concern. This data can be reviewed and analyzed at any time by school or district staff. The database is password protected for privacy.