

# Hillsborough County Public Schools

## *Mental Health Plan Guide*

**2019-2020**



**Mental Health Planning Committee**

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**2019-2020 Additional Committee Members**

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Melissa Merchant, District Mental Health Clinician  
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## **Background and Legislation**

During the 2018 session of the Florida Legislature, considerable attention was given to student safety and mental health as a result of the February 14, 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Details surrounding the school shooting brought to light the significant mental health history of the perpetrator, thus creating a sense of urgency about reinforcing the structural and physical safety of school buildings while also providing needed mental health supports for students.

In May 2019, the Florida Legislature provided additional requirements (Senate Bill 7030) for school districts based on recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (MSDHSPSA) Commission. This legislation was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis in May, 2019.

## **Mental Health Timelines**

SB 7030 requires that a mental health screening or assessment is provided within 15 days of a referral for school-based or community-based mental health services. Additionally, school-based mental health services will be initiated 15 days after screening or assessment has been completed. Community-based mental health services will begin within 30 days after the school or district has generated a mental health referral. The goal of HCPS is to provide the necessary supports and interventions in a timely manner to ensure students' needs are being met.

## **Threat Assessment Teams**

School and district staff will be trained to use a standardized threat assessment protocol endorsed by the Florida Department of Education. This protocol will be adopted into HCPS threat assessment procedures. Initial and ongoing training to all site-based staff and key stakeholders will be provided.

The school based threat assessment team (SB-TAT) is expected to meet monthly during the school year to ensure coordination of resources, assessments, and interventions for students. Interventions will be aligned with the existing Behavior Matrix, Student Code of Conduct, as well as all relevant policies and statutes. Reporting protocols for SB-TAT actions will include notification to relevant groups (e.g., DB-TAT, parents, guardians, law enforcement, teachers) as needed.

The district based threat assessment team (DB-TAT) will provide oversight, monitoring, and compliance functions for each SB-TAT. The DB-TAT will include a designee for the Superintendent, District School Safety Specialist, and representatives from the following district divisions: School Security, Exceptional Student Education, Administration, Teaching and Learning, Operations, Juvenile Justice Transition. The Director of Student Services, Supervisors for Psychological Services, School Social Work, School Health, School Counseling, and the newly established District Mental Health Team will also be integral members of the DB-TAT.)

When a student is being provided intervention/services due to a previous threat and the student transfers to a different school site, the administrator will communicate with the receiving school's administrator to ensure that services and interventions remain in place until the threat assessment team at the receiving school independently determines the need for continuing intervention services.

## **Data and Evidence Reviewed**

Number of students who received mental health screenings or assessments
Number of students referred to school-based mental health services providers
Number of students referred to community-based mental health services providers
Number of students who received school-based interventions, services or assistance
Number of students who received community-based interventions, services or assistance
Number of suicide assessments at your site
Number of threat assessments at your site
Number of law enforcement Baker Acts initiated at your site
Number of newly registered student marked 'yes' for the mental health question

## **Process for Identifying and Delivering Evidence-Based Interventions**

The district relies on processes and teams already embedded in the schools to ensure that interventions are evidence-based. Specifically, Problem-Solving Leadership Teams (PSLTs) meet at all school sites, in some cases weekly and at least monthly, to analyze both school and individual data using Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to approach problem solving.

These practices and supporting teams use a consistent problem-solving model: problem identification; problem analysis and barrier identification; action plan and implementation; and progress monitoring and evaluation to address concerns. These PSLTs are led by school administrators, and include classroom teachers, student services staff, and exceptional student educators to systematically consider school, small group, and individual issues. Parent involvement is actively sought and is an essential part of all of these processes.

The MTSS approach to problem-solving is amenable to the mental health and student safety issues currently facing schools. This approach begins with universal screening utilizing Early Warning Systems and provides tiered interventions matched to available data as an evidence-based framework for problem-solving. School-based student services personnel (e.g., school counselors, school health staff, school psychologists, school social workers) meet with students and parents or guardians to develop and implement behavior support plans while providing necessary assistance in learning appropriate behavior and developing self-management skills. Currently, referrals to both internal and external service providers for academic and other wraparound services are available to students through recommendations by student services personnel.

These recommendations result in specific efforts to differentiate and personalize supports and to establish systems that will enhance the identification and delivery of student interventions along the spectrum of available services. At this time, an initial request for services occurs when a student is referred to student services for assistance. The district is in the process of developing a tool that will automate and streamline elements of this process. The tool will be accessible to educational professionals to allow for synthesis of information about existing interventions, including student intervention history, regardless of student mobility between sites. This tool will allow for monitoring and more intentional focus on usage, frequency, and outcomes.

## **Existing Referral Procedures for School-Based and Community-Based Services**

Upon receiving referrals, student services personnel assess the student's case, and coordinate service delivery. All referrals comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protections of student privacy as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements for medical information.

Current processes allow for referral or service delivery through the following mechanisms:

- On site by student services personnel,
- On site by community agencies through partnerships outlined in Memoranda of Agreement (MOA),
- Via community referrals created by district personnel to receive services in the community, and/or
- Via agency access letters allowing for private providers to initiate and deliver student care on school campuses.

## **Capacity and Credentials of Current Mental Health Providers**

Current HCPS mental health providers are typically referred to as Student Services personnel. These personnel include school psychologists, school counselors, school health staff, and school social workers.

## **Central Florida Behavior Health Network Partnership**

The School Board has approved Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc. to serve as the managing entity of contracted community providers, who will deliver evidenced-based mental health services to students including:

- Mental Health Assessments
- Mental Health and Co-Occurring Diagnoses
- Mental Health Interventions (including transport to crisis care as needed)
- Mental Health Treatments
- Mental Health Transition/Recovery Supports

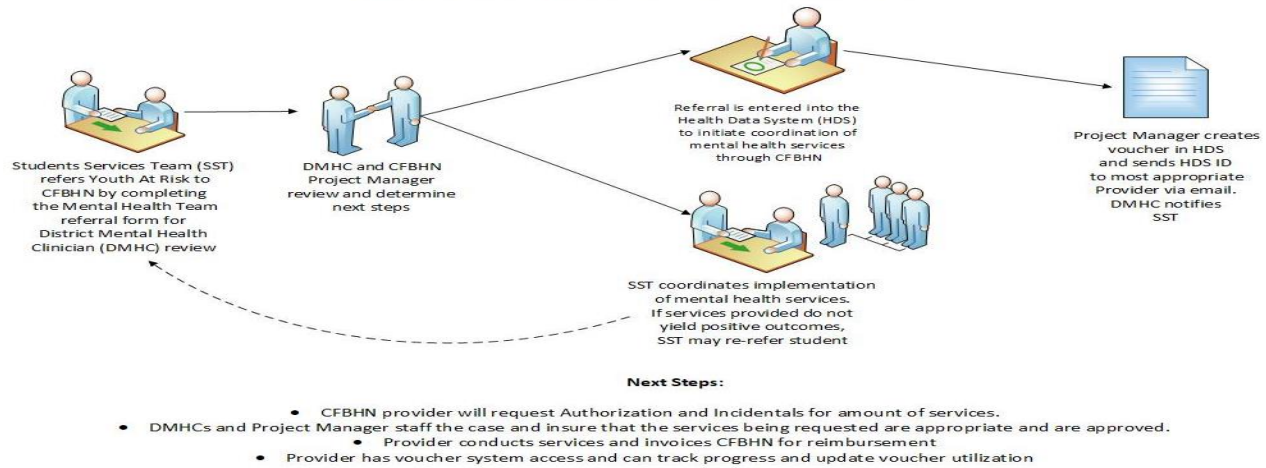


The following graphic illustrates the process by which school-based student services personnel will refer students to the Central Florida Behavioral Health Network:

## HCPS Mental Health Team/ Central Florida Behavioral Health Network Referral Process

*Mental Health Matters: Enhancing Coordination of Mental Health Care for Youth at Risk*

*Referrals are entered into Central Florida Health Data System (HDS) which will report outcomes for services, types of services, area of services, dollar amounts committed vs. spent*



## Description of Mental Health Services

The Supervisor, Clinical Care was hired to work directly with district personnel and contracted community mental health providers. This person serves on the Local Planning Team (LPT) and participates in ongoing needs assessment and collaboration between and among mental health providers. Additionally, this person manages the ITN and subsequent contracts with selected mental health providers including case management, documentation compliance, provider monitoring and data receipt, payment for services rendered, contract budget management, and coordination of care between students and providers (including the student's primary care provider and any other providers working with the student). This person collaborates with the School-Based Threat Assessment Teams (SB-TAT) and the District Behavioral Threat Assessment Team (D-BTAT) in performing necessary duties related to MSDHSPSA.

The Supervisor, Emotional Wellness supports mental health by providing professional development resources that promote student behavior management as well as appropriate mental health awareness, prevention and intervention programs and initiatives. This position supports schools with Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to include providing social emotional learning skill building to targeted students. Given the size of the district, the compliance mandates included within the legislation, and the need for ongoing professional development and reporting, this position is necessary to support the fidelity of implementation and scope of the work required. This person is responsible for the creation and dissemination of mental health professional development content, in collaboration with other divisions, and performs necessary duties related to MSDHSPSA. Data entry, compliance monitoring, and program evaluation are also included in job responsibilities.

The Supervisor, Clinical Care and the Supervisor, Emotional Wellness will provide oversight of both individual student case management and referrals as well as coordination of effort with internal and external service providers. Additionally, these individuals collaborate with divisional staff and experts

on the creation of professional development resources, such as evidenced-based social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, and universal screening protocols. Duties will also include the monitoring and data reporting mechanisms required for students referred for care.

Ten district clinicians will form the basis of an interdisciplinary team that will work with existing student services personnel on specific case-management and student referral needs. These individuals will be the primary point of contact for the provider contracts and will serve as a liaison between the district and mental health providers with whom the district contracts, in compliance with FERPA and HIPPA. These individuals will have specific responsibility for monitoring implementation of evidence-based practices including, but not limited to:

- Consult with parents, guardians, and school staff about student needs
- Collaborate with site-based student services staff to support use of formal/informal universal screening methods
- Consult with stakeholders regarding screenings, threat assessments, referrals, and care delivery
- Assist with suicide and threat assessments as necessary
- Serve as consultants to school-based personnel regarding potential implementation of the Baker Act
- Refer and coordinate services with primary care and contracted providers
- Serve as a liaison among partners, agencies, and staff
- Collaborate with School Security to refine procedures and safety/security awareness protocols
- Participate in Problem Solving Leadership Teams (PSLTs) at alternative educational programs, as needed
- Train stakeholders in the areas of mental health, crisis response, and evidence-based counseling programs
- Support site-based student services staff with planning and facilitating group counseling interventions for targeted students
- Support the process used by site-based staff for students' return-to-school transition after inpatient treatment
- Consult with stakeholders regarding available resources
- Monitor compliance of schools' mental health data

The addition of 12 student services personnel on special assignment who are certificated or licensed will be utilized to deliver Tier 2 and Tier 3 evidenced-based interventions to identified students. This additional staff will assist the district with meeting the nationally recommended ratio model of school-based mental health service providers to students. Interventions may include providing individual or group counseling to students at secondary sites. Lessons will include teaching skill-building content through research based SEL curriculum. Progress monitoring will also be documented and reported to the district's mental health team and appropriate stakeholders school sites. The team will also assist schools in providing direct services in a timely manner.

To increase time spent for student services on mental health, Hillsborough County Public Schools is proposing the following updated policy: *HCPS will follow best practices by ensuring that school counselors are dedicating their time to providing direct and indirect counseling services to students. These services to students include: individual, small group and classroom counseling, preventive and responsive services including crisis/mental health counseling as needed, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, administrators and community agencies, advocacy for students, referral services, and data analysis.*

The following data represents updated student services personnel ratios for Hillsborough County Public Schools: School Psychologists: 1:1,088, School Counselors: 1:426, School Social Worker: 1:890. Please note that in our plan we are hiring 12 additional student services staff to provide direct mental health services and lower per pupil ratio at the secondary level.

### **Partner Collaboration**

Partnerships with community agencies and providers will be the foundation of this model. HCPS expects that the SB-TAT will have clear assessment, diagnostic, intervention, treatment, and recovery protocols in place with these providers. These partnerships will include, but not be limited to:

- Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc. (ACTS)
- Agency for Health Care Administration
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- AMI Kids-YES
- Bay Area Behavioral Services
- BayCare Behavioral Health
- Child and Family Counseling Program
- Chrysalis
- Drug Abuse Comprehensive Coordinating Office (DACCO)
- Department of Children and Families
- Department of Health
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Eckerd Youth Alternatives
- Federal, state, and local courts
- Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies
- Florida Hospital
- Gracepoint
- Guardian Ad Litem
- Northside Mental Health
- PACE Center for Girls
- Private providers
- Success 4 Kids and Families
- Tampa Bay Crisis Center
- Tampa General Hospital
- University of South Florida Health Psychiatry

### **Evidence-Based Programs and Services**

The mental health services and initiatives supported by this allocation will reinforce and extend existing programs and interventions to help more students. The district does have several evidence-based behavior management and intervention programs in place. These begin at Tier 1 of the MTSS model and include interventions at Tier 2 for selected students. Funding from the MSDHSPSA allocation will allow the district to enhance existing strategies and create systematic protocols for Tier 3 interventions as well. The current array of program offerings includes:

- ACT Now Mental Health
- Champs
- Check and Connect
- Check In/Check Out
- Kids on the Block
- LifeSkills Training (currently grant funded)



- Narcotics Overdose Prevention Education (NOPE)
- Restorative Practices
- School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Second Step (Currently only in grant funded schools)
- Sandy Hook Promise - Start with Hello
- Trauma Sensitivity Training
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Training (currently grant funded)

### **Professional Development Needs**

Existing student and programmatic data suggests that professional development is needed for teachers, staff, administrators, student services personnel and district personnel to support mental health awareness, treatment, and prevention initiatives for students and their families. When appropriate, students and parents will also be invited to participate. There is a need for training in the following areas:

- Counseling Skill Building
- Mental Health Awareness for Staff, Students, Families, and the Community
- Mental Health Needs Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning (LGBTQ+) Students
- Mental Health “Train the Trainer” In-service
- MTSS-B Processes and Best Practice
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum
- SEL Community Building Sessions
- SEL Strategies (such as mindfulness)
- Sex Trafficking/Refugee Youth
- Early Warning Systems
- Data-Based Decision Making
- Suicide Assessment Protocol
- Threat Assessment Protocol
- Trauma Sensitive Practices
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)

### **Program Implementation and Outcomes**

Hillsborough County Public Schools will demonstrate its commitment to meeting the requirements of the Mental Health Assistance Allocation through the provision of the following metrics by September 30, 2020 as outlined on the Outcomes and Expenditures Report Checklist:

- Students who receive screenings or assessments
- Students who are referred to either school-based or community-based providers for services or assistance
- Students who receive either school-based or community based interventions, services, or assistance
- School-based and community-based mental health providers, including licensure type, paid for from funds provided through the allocation
- Contract-based collaborative efforts or partnerships with community mental health programs, agencies, or providers

The 2019-2020 Annual Mental Health Allocation Plan is hereby approved by the School Board of Hillsborough County.