



Mental Health Assistance Plan Alachua County Public Schools 2019-2020

Delivers evidence-based, mental health assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery, through a multi-tiered system of supports.

The Alachua County School District currently uses a four-step problem-solving model within the Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) three-tier process to focus on awareness and prevention and to identify and address mental health issues in the schools. Tier-1 consists of classroom-based supports, to include an evidence-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum that is employed across the district, teacher training (mental health awareness, suicide prevention and "Trauma Sensitive School" training), direct student training, employment of peer prevention programs, and classroom instruction by school counselors. Tier-2 supports are provided by school-based mental health professionals (including school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists), which include small-group and individual school counseling, individual and small-group behavior support interventions, and specialized group intervention programming provided by community agencies at most middle schools. In addition, the district employs a small number of social workers through federal and local grant funding that are assigned both to individual schools and to clusters of schools. These professionals provide additional Tier-2 supports as well as assist in the referral process for Tier-3 resources. Tier 3 supports are provided to students who exhibit the greatest need. Tier-3 supports include referrals to outside agencies (mental health counseling and substance-abuse treatment) and, in some cases, school-based wrap-around services from contracted mental health providers. The district seeks to shore up and expand Tier-2 and Tier-3 supports, in particular, through the employment of additional certified school social workers and additional mental health specialists utilizing state mental health allocation funding in order to more effectively reach students with mental health needs or those at risk for developing mental health problems.

Focuses on evidence-based mental health services for students with one or more co-occurring mental health or substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnose.

Each school is required to submit a plan for implementation of Social Emotional Learning to ensure effective Tier-1 implementation. School-based Data Review and Student Services Teams at each school are provided training in MTSS strategies and the four-step problem-solving model in order to identify more effectively students at risk for mental health needs. School teams use Early Warning System data as well as teacher and staff observational data to determine effectively if students require Tier-2 or Tier-3 supports. For students identified as Tier-2 or Tier-3 candidates, a mental-health/substance-abuse screening instrument is used to analyze the problem and to assist in determining the most appropriate intervention. Individual Educational Planning teams review data, screening instrument results, and (if appropriate) gain parental consent for release of information and consent for agency referrals. Individual intervention plans are developed for each student.

A school-based "case manager" is appointed for each student referred, and that individual works with district staff to conduct screening, complete a district referral, to coordinate additional data gathering (as needed), and to assist in completing additional paperwork as needed for outside agency referrals. As described below, direct services to students are provided by agencies willing to provide contracted evidence-based mental health and substance abuse counseling and psychiatric services to students



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attending public schools. Students are referred to outside mental health professionals as appropriate. Additionally, school staff (school counselors and school psychologists) provide direct services to students in house that includes evidenced-based programs and counseling techniques. District social workers are certified professionals and they, too, are utilized to provide evidence-based services directly to students who have been identified with needs.

Includes direct employment of school-based mental health services providers (i.e., school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and other licensed mental health professionals) to reduce staff-to-student ratios and meet student mental health assistance needs.

Mental health concerns are often first noticed in the school setting. Recognizing this, the school district has responded by ensuring that every school has a dedicated school counselor (larger schools have more than one), by employing school psychologists to serve in clusters of schools, and by utilizing federal and local grant funding to employ social workers and mental health providers for high-need schools. In spite of this, gaps in services remain, and, consequently, a significant need for expanded identification, diagnosis, and treatment exists. Consequently, the district has determined to utilize State Mental Health Assistance Allocation (MHAA) funds to add additional social workers and mental health specialists to assist in identifying students with needs and to provide direct service.

Currently, the district employs two district-based mental health specialists (utilizing MHAA funds) to coordinate services at the district level among schools, to coordinate the partnerships and contracts with outside agencies and providers, to facilitate assistance to families in obtaining and accessing services, and to collect program outcome data necessary for reporting. These individuals are trained and credentialed social workers, mental health professionals, or certified school counselor specialists with knowledge of mental health and social work related experience. Their duties include training of school-based teams on implementation of the MTSS problem-solving process related to mental health needs, training on tier 2 and 3 interventions, and training and support in appropriate mental health referrals. These employees also assist in evaluation of Tier-1 and Tier-2 support services in schools and further support appropriate implementation of evidence based intervention strategies. They also support contracted service providers in providing individual and group counseling in schools. Finally, the mental health specialists are YMHFA trainers and provide regular trainings to school staff.

In addition to the two mental health specialists, the district also employs (utilizing local and grant funds) four certified social workers who are each assigned to a cluster of schools. School social workers develop and manage a caseload of students and families at each school they serve. Social workers provide tier 2 and 3 services through direct counseling to individual students and to small groups based on need and/or referral to outside agencies for counseling. They also help facilitate assistance to families in obtaining and accessing services, and they collect program outcome data necessary for reporting. The districts seeks to further expand its cadre of social workers for the 2019-2020 school year so that all schools in the district have an assigned social worker on a weekly basis. The district also employs one licensed mental health professional to serve high need students at our two district programs for students with emotional behavioral disabilities through federal funds.



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Additionally, the district facilitates a "System of Care" program that serves students at high-need schools. This program is supervised by a dedicated administrator, a dedicated social worker for each participating elementary school, and a contracted mental health specialists for each elementary school. Costs for the social workers and mental health professionals are paid through a locally funded grant initiative. The district covers the cost of the program administrator and, additionally, the district funds a social worker to serve the middle schools that are in the feeder pattern of participating elementary schools. The program is further supplemented with an additional mental health specialist and certified social worker (utilizing MHAA funds) to provide System of Care services at one high-need high school.

Identifies strategies to increase the amount of time student services personnel spend providing direct mental health services (e.g., review and revision of staffing allocations based on school or student mental health assistance needs).

Each year, school staffing ratios are reviewed and revised at the district level to assure that each school has personnel dedicated to identifying and working with students who exhibit a need for mental health services. All schools have at least one school counselor (larger schools have more than one) and access to a school psychologist. Currently, social workers are assigned to clusters of schools with the highest need. At this time, 12 district schools and our charter schools are served. In addition, 7 schools are served through the System of Care and our 2 district programs share one mental health counselor providing direct services. As noted above, two district-based mental health specialists were hired (utilizing MHAA funds) to coordinate services at the district level among all schools.

While the district currently has contracts and agreements with collaborating agencies for the provision of mental health services, experience has shown that student mental health concerns are more quickly and efficiently addressed, in most cases, "in house" by district-employed mental health professionals. For the upcoming year, therefore, the district plans to supplement further its staff of professionals, utilizing MHAA funding in order to increase the number of staff providing direct identification and intervention services to students across the district. In order to increase the amount of time that school-based student services personnel spend providing direct services to students, the district intends to hire up to five additional district-based social workers to staff schools across the district with the goal that every school receives the services of a social worker at least one day per week. In addition, at least one additional social worker will be staffed full-time at one high-need elementary school. An additional mental health counselor will also be employed to provide tier 3 supports at our district programs for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities so each program will be served by a full-time licensed mental health provider. The additional school based social workers and mental health providers will work with existing school social workers, district mental health specialists, school counselors, and school psychologist to provide direct services. Additional personnel will result in a lower ratio of students to providers, thus increasing the amount of time each school-based student service person will have to work directly with students.



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Includes contracts or interagency agreements with local behavioral health providers or Community Action Team services to provide behavioral health services on or off the school campus (plan must specify the type of services that are provided in the agreement).

The district currently has partnerships, contracts, and memorandums of understanding with local agencies providing evidence-based mental health services both in schools as “wrap-around” services and off-site through appointment and special arrangement. These include partnerships with the University of Florida, Shands Teaching Hospital, as well as a number of other public and private mental health and substance-abuse agencies in the community. The district’s “System of Care” program is focused on four high-need elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school and is funded through district funding, MHAA, and local grant-sourced funds. This program features a mental health treatment option through contracted services and “in-house” mental health specialists.

A Request for Proposals was developed last school year to expand those existing partnerships to agencies willing to provide contracted evidence-based mental health and substance abuse counseling and psychiatric services to students attending public schools. Emphasis was on securing services for students across all grade levels (PK-12). Services included individual, group, and family counseling; consultative services; substance-abuse counseling; evaluation and diagnosis; and data collection. The district employed providers willing to provide services regardless of insurance or Medicaid and funded services not covered through those means with Mental Health Allocation funding. Agencies initiated services in a timely manner (or within 2 weeks of referral). It is anticipated that additional contracts may be implemented for the 2019-20 school year (using MHAA funds) in order to provide a higher level of services. Contracts are structured on a “fee-for-service” basis and services were coordinated with each agency to utilize Medicaid and insurance funding when available. In some instances, services were “in-house” as part of a wraparound mental health program at individual schools, but when outside clinical services are required, those options are included as a part of agency contracts.

State how the plan will establish school board policies and procedures that ensure for all schools, including charter schools, to ensure: (1) Students referred for a mental health screening are assessed within 15 days of referral; (2) School-based mental health services are initiated within 15 days of identification and assessment; and (3) Community-based mental health services for students are initiated within 30 days of referral.

As stated above, the school district has an existing procedure in place to ensure all students are assessed for mental health concerns as part of an ongoing process and, when identified, in a timely manner. School-based Student Services Teams at each school are trained in MTSS strategies and the problem-solving model in order to identify students at risk for mental health needs. School teams also use Early Warning System data as well as teacher and staff observational data to determine effectively if students require Tier-2 or Tier-3 supports. For students identified as Tier-2 or Tier-3 candidates, a mental-health/substance-abuse screening instrument is used to analyze the problem and to assist in determining the most appropriate intervention. School and district staff assess each student within 15 days of identification. For students identified for school-based services, those services begin as soon as possible, but will begin no later than 15 days after assessment. Hiring of social workers at each school



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will positively affect students by decreasing the number of days before school-based services can be initiated. Individual Educational Planning teams review data, screening instrument results, and (if appropriate) make a recommendation for community-based services. School staff works with the district mental health specialists to identify and arrange services and to gain parental consent for release of information and consent for agency referrals. **Students receiving mental health contracted funds services will have service initiated within 30 days. The district will develop a form and tracking procedure to document the referral, assessment, and treatment timeline.**

Charter schools have the choice of writing their own Mental Health Plans (MHP) or participating in the district MHP. Charter schools participating in the district MHP are provided consultative services through the district student services department to determine student needs at each individual charter school. Mental health specialists and district social workers will be assigned to each participating charter school in order to provide services directly to students based on outcomes of needs assessment within the same time period as is provided to regular district school students. Charter school students identified for community services at schools participating in the district MHP will be referred within 15 days, and costs for services will be paid from the district MHAA funding.

As required, the district MHP will be approved by the School Board prior to submittal to the state. District School Board policies are reviewed annually and any changes or additional policies that may be necessary due to legislation and this MHP will be recommended to the Board through the district staff attorney's office.

Describes process for coordinating mental health services with a student's primary mental health care provider and other mental health providers involved in the student's care

School-based mental health staff and dedicated district mental health staff coordinate services with outside providers. Providers include contracted agencies and local partnerships as well as student primary care providers, when appropriate. Parents are consulted to determine the best option for each student. The district contracts with local providers in order to provide all students in need of services those services regardless of insurance or Medicaid. If parents prefer to use students' primary or other mental health provider, those preferences are honored, and district mental health specialists work with parents to document those arrangements and collect relevant data needed for state reporting. Parents are asked to provide a release of information for the district to consult and coordinate services with all mental health providers. For those students in the System of Care, monthly reports are provided by the mental health provider to SOC staff.

Identifies strategies to: (1) Improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance abuse disorders; (2) Improve the provision of early intervention services; and (3) Assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

School teams are trained to identify social/emotional, behavioral or substance abuse disorders utilizing EWS data (attendance, behavior and change of grades). In addition, school based mental health staff



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utilize the SDQ (Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire) and/or the SSRS to screen students for potential mental health concerns.

School-based mental health staff provide early intervention through counseling and behavioral intervention strategies. District mental health specialists hired through MHAA funds provide training and support in the identification and provision of interventions most appropriate based on student need. An increase in social workers will directly impact the number of students receiving intervention and the timeliness of implementation.

Schools receive training on mental health (Kognito/YMHFA) as well as training specific to trauma and creating trauma sensitive schools/classrooms. Deans/BRTs are trained in trauma sensitive and restorative practices in responding to behaviors of students who may have trauma history. In addition, school counselors/social workers receive training in trauma sensitive intervention. Students with significant need may be referred for outside counseling to agencies specializing in working on students with trauma (Village Counseling Center, Child Advocacy Center, Meridian).

Expenditures

Number of school-based mental health providers funded by the allocation and licensure/certification for each.

The district intends to hire six additional social workers (certified school social workers) and one additional mental health specialist with MHAA funds. These positions will supplement three current mental health specialists and two current school social workers paid with MHAA funds. All social workers are certified school Social workers. Mental health counselors are licensed mental health counselors or licensed social workers.

Number of community-based mental health providers funded by the allocation and licensure for each.

The district currently has contracted agreements/partnerships with two community mental health program agencies that are paid from MHAA funds. These providers are utilized when services required cannot be administered by school- or district-based mental health professionals. These agencies are licensed mental health agencies and are staffed with professionals holding mental health licensure or registered interns supervised as required by state guidelines.

School district expenditures for services provided by contract-based collaborative efforts or partnerships with community mental health program agencies or providers.

Currently, the district contracts with Village Counseling Center, Meridian Behavioral Health, and Children's Home Society for mental health counselors at district schools. These costs are paid from locally sourced grants and MHAA funds. The district also has multiple partnerships and agreements with local agencies who provide mental health programming at no cost to the district. These include



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agreements with Children’s Home Society, UF Health, Alachua County Crisis Center, Meridian Behavioral Health, and other counseling providers.

Other expenditures (specify type and amount).

In addition to the mental health services and training provided through the MHAA funding, the district provides training, social workers, and mental health contracted services through district funding and through a number of local and federal grant programs. Currently, the district operates a “System of Care” program that serves students at four high-need elementary and middle schools. This program includes an administrative oversight person, a dedicated social worker for each elementary school, and a contracted mental health specialists for each elementary school. Costs for the social workers and mental health professionals are paid through a locally funded grant initiative. The district covers the cost of the program administrator and, additionally, the district funds a social worker to serve the middle schools that are in the feeder pattern of participating elementary schools.

Since its inception, the district has also dedicated a portion of its Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant to provide supplemental district based social workers to high need schools and to fund training to teachers and school staff in methods and techniques for identifying and improving mental health issues, behavioral health problems, and substance abuse.

The district intends to use MHAA funds to supplement existing programs designed to address student mental health concerns. In addition to MHAA funds dedicated to the employment of school social workers, mental health specialists, and community-based providers (as described above), the district intends to utilize MHAA funds to provide specialized supplies, assessments, equipment (a laptop for each new social worker and mental health specialist for data collection and case management), and materials used by social workers and mental health professionals in the course of working with students to ameliorate mental health concerns; costs for training educators and other school staff in detecting and responding to mental health issues (stipends for teachers attending trainings and costs for substitute teachers needed when teachers are in trainings during the school day); and the cost for curriculum materials needed to train educators and curriculum materials used to implement programs with students for addressing mental health issues, substance abuse, and other social-emotional problems. Approximately 15% of the MHAA funds will be dedicated to the “other expenditures” category.

Expenditure Assurances

| Yes | No | |
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| X | | One hundred percent of state funds are used to expand 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 with appropriate behavioral health services. |



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| X | | Mental health assistance allocation funds do not supplant other funding sources OR increase salaries or provide staff bonuses. |
| X | | Describes how district will maximize use of other sources of funding to provide school-based mental health services (e.g., Medicaid reimbursement, third-party payments and grants). |

The funding for the MHAA is managed by the Executive Director of Student Services in coordination with Director of Project Development. One-hundred percent of funding is and will be used to pay the cost of additional school-based mental health professionals, including the salary and benefits for school social workers and mental health specialists; specialized supplies, assessments, equipment (a laptop for each new social worker and mental health specialist), and materials used by mental health professionals; costs for training educators and other school staff in detecting and responding to mental health issues; cost for curriculum materials needed to train educators and to implement programs with students for addressing mental health issues, substance abuse, and other social-emotional problems; and to fund the cost of contracted services with community-based providers in order to connect children, youth, and families with appropriate behavioral services.

All expenditures made through MHAA funds are supplemental and do not supplant other sources. MHAA funds have not, and will not, be used to increase salaries or to provide staff bonuses.

The district intends to contract with local providers in order to provide all students in need of services those services regardless of insurance or Medicaid. Contracts with community agencies require use of Medicaid funding when it is available. If parents prefer to use students' primary or other mental health provider, those preferences will be honored, and district mental health specialists will work with parents to document those arrangements and collect relevant data needed for state reporting. Parents will be asked to provide a release of information for the district to consult and coordinate services with all mental health providers.

Identifies the number and ratios of FDOE-certified or licensed, school-based mental health services providers employed by the district (i.e., school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and other mental health services providers by licensure type).

Total enrollment - 30,091

School counselors – 66 total—at least one per school. Ratio: 1/455

School Social Workers – 6 System of Care + 4 Title IV Ratio: 1/3009

2019-20 (addition of 1 SOC and 5 school-based with MHAA funds) ratio: 1/1880

School Psychologists – 13. Ratio: 1/2314

Other mental health – 4 (2 district + 1 center school) Ratio 1/10,030

2019-20: 4 (addition of 1 MHC for center school). Ratio: 1/7522



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Includes system 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; 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; and number of students who received community-based interventions, services or assistance.

Mental health services are supervised by the Executive Director of Student Services and Exceptional Education and by the Supervisor of Guidance Services. These individuals are responsible for coordinating services at the school level, to include work performed by school counselors, school psychologists, and district social workers. These individuals are also responsible for collection and reporting data and information necessary for the administration of the MHAA Plan. To assist them in this process, the district also employs two district-based mental health specialists (utilizing MHAA funds) to coordinate mental health services at the district level among schools, to coordinate the partnerships and contracts with outside agencies and providers, to facilitate assistance to families in obtaining and accessing services, and to collect program outcome data necessary for reporting. These data include the number of students identified as high risk for mental health or co-occurring substance abuse disorders; the number 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 number of students who received community-based interventions, services or assistance. Data is collected using the student information system. School counselors, social workers, and other school-based mental health professionals document student assessments, interventions, and referrals to outside agencies via a district database system. In addition, records are kept through our System of Care monitoring system for enrolled students.

Date Plan approved by School Board: July 23rd, 2019

Board Chair Signature:



Robert Hyatt

Superintendent Signature:



Karen Clarke: