

Behavioral Health and Education Partnership Helping Children Learn by Providing Behavioral Health Services

Family Feedback

The Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health (DSAMH) held a family feedback group on January 15, 2013 as part of a monitoring visit. Families were positive about the new school-based mental health services. In the course of the conversation, the parents listed several barriers that prevented them from seeking mental health services previously.

Barriers mentioned:

- **Transportation and Lack of Access**
- **Parents were not aware of treatment options**
- **Parents were overwhelmed and didn't feel they could take on anything more-** One parent stated he wished these services would have been available for him when he was a child dealing with his own issues. Then maybe his son wouldn't be struggling like he is now.
- **Time-** By the time the parent took off of work, traveled to the school, checked out the child, drove to the appointment and then returned the child to school, the parent and child missed over two hours of work and school (and this is for an Urban Area, imagine the time lost for both parent and child in a Rural Area).
- **Cost to Family and Funding Issues for Schools and LMHAs-** No previous access to behavioral health resources.

Families expressed deep gratitude for the services they were receiving for their family. Parents participated in family therapy once a month and many also participated in a parent education course taught at the school in the evening. Parents felt these services had significantly strengthened their families.

School Staff

DSAMH staff held a stakeholder feedback group on January 16, 2013 as part a monitoring visit and met with over 20 staff members from Weber and Ogden School District where the MHEI was funding services. In the course of the conversation, the staff shared several examples of the benefits of the new school based services.

School Staff Feedback:

- A school counselor talked about a classroom of 24 students. Because of one youth with significant behavior problems (and unrecognized/untreated medical problem) the whole class couldn't function. He went on to say that with services the child is doing "amazingly well" and "all the class is doing better."
- When asked about how they felt about the services, one teacher said "Thrilled" and then added "That is a huge understatement." She went on to say that she was having problems with a couple of families she had not been able to address until these services became available. Now families are engaged because they feel supported, not judged. Another teacher responded "life altering."
- One Elementary teacher said "when the classroom environment is calmer, all kids learn."
- A Teacher gave an example of how behavioral health in schools influences academic performance. "He was struggling academically but after receiving help, he increased his scores by 31% while the expected increase is only 7%; it was great!"
- Another teacher spoke of the help having a Family Resource Facilitator (FRF) assigned to the school had been and gave an example of a family who had just been evicted. The FRF helped them obtain temporary housing, access public transportation options so the children could continue at their school, connected the family to a budgeting class, and successfully supported them in their search for employment. With this support the child did not miss one day of school and was able to arrive on time each day.
- One school counselor worked with a student who frequently became physically aggressive. This resulted in him often going home with scratches and bite marks much to the "frustration" of his wife. With behavioral interventions, the child has now learned to "Stop, think and do the right thing." The child is now succeeding academically and reading above benchmark for the first time.
- Another school counselor stated that these services were helping to break generational problem behaviors and issues for families. We no longer have to worry about funding issues or how the family or the school will pay for services, just make the referral when there is a need and it is taken care of.