Mental Health in Schools: Survey of School Districts

Prepared for the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee
February 8, 2019

Demand for Mental Health Services in Schools

- **Safe UT**
  - From July 2017 to December 2018
  - 1 chat to SafeUT for every 31 students

- **Legislative Survey**
  - FY 2018
  - Among responding districts, on average 1 notification of threat of suicide was sent to parents for every 128 students
  - Districts reported notification rates ranging from 1 per 22 students to 1 per 657 students
**Survey Methodology**

- Survey sent to local education agency (LEA) superintendents from legislative staff
- Completed January 7th - 28th, 2019
- Sent to 41 districts
- 27 responded – 65.9% response rate
- Data caveats:
  - Survey tool was tested but not validated
  - Not representative of districts that did not respond
  - Variable interpretation of questions

For the purpose of this survey, “mental health services” included:

- Mental health assessments or screenings
- Individual, group, and/or family therapy or counseling
- Parent education
- Social skills and other skills development groups
- Facilitated peer support
- Family resource facilitation
- Case management
- Consultation services (including referrals)
- Medication management
- Crisis response protocol
- Telehealth services (providing any of the services listed above)
- Crisis hotlines or SafeUT app
- Respite/supported housing
- Residential care
- Inpatient care
**Funding for Mental Health Services:**

**Total Spending and By Funding Source**

Total spending reported by responding districts in FY 2018:

$58,543,300

- **Unrestricted state funding (i.e. K-12 funding, Voted & Board State Guarantee, charter school local replacement, etc.)**: 52%
- **Local property tax revenue (i.e. voted/board levy)**: 33%
- **Federal grants and programs**: 13%
- **Other**: 2%

**Who Provides Services Within the LEA?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Social Worker</th>
<th>School Nurse</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement</td>
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<td>Attendance</td>
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<td>Early Warning Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Engagement &amp; Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodations for Students with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide &amp; Drug Abuse Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological &amp; Academic Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to ALL Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundational Skills Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Support &amp; Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>School/Home/Community Collaboration</td>
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<td>Student's Physical Health</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: State Board of Education*
RATIOS OF LEA PROFESSIONALS TO STUDENTS:
RANGE AND OVERALL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>1:299</td>
<td>1:862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>1:1,067</td>
<td>1:1,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>1:479</td>
<td>1:28,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>1:774</td>
<td>1:16,165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Averages are for districts reporting at least one of a professional type. Several districts reported 0 FTEs for this professional.

How often do LEAs use the following resources to provide mental health services for students?

LEA employees who provide mental health services
- % Very Frequently
- % Frequently
- % Occasionally
- % Rarely
- % Very Rarely
- % Never

Mental health professionals employed by outside agency who provide mental health services at school
- % Very Frequently
- % Frequently
- % Occasionally
- % Rarely
- % Very Rarely
- % Never

Mental health professionals employed by outside agency who provide mental health services only if a student is in crisis
- % Very Frequently
- % Frequently
- % Occasionally
- % Rarely
- % Very Rarely
- % Never

Remote services such as telehealth programs
- % Very Frequently
- % Frequently
- % Occasionally
- % Rarely
- % Very Rarely
- % Never

Range of professional to student ratios, for districts reporting at least 1 professional

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0%
What services are provided, where, and how?

- Crisis response protocol
- Medication management
- Case management
- Family resource facilitation
- Facilitated peer support
- Social skills and other skills development groups
- Parent education
- Individual, group, an/or family therapy or counseling
- Mental health assessments or screening

Not available at school or by referral
Outside of school through referral from Non-LEA employee
Outside of school through a referral from LEA employee
At school provided by non-LEA employee
At school provided by LEA employee

When an LEA refers a student to mental health services outside of school, who pays for those services?

- The LEA
- A non-LEA entity that provides school-based mental health services
- The student, either through personal insurance or private payment

- “Access to mental health services most often comes down to ability to pay or quality of insurance coverage. Insurance coverage is tricky and has seemingly endless variables.”
- “Many of our students with the greatest mental health needs, who are a danger to themselves and others, do not have access to funding to get the medical services they need.”
**Agreement with the following statement:** “Students are able to access services that meet the majority of their mental health needs (at school, through referral from the LEA, or on their own).”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**5 Largest Gaps of Mental Health Services**

- Responding districts reported the largest gaps in specific services related to their LEA:
  - Individual, Group and/or Family Therapy
  - Mental Health Assessments or screenings
  - Parent Education
  - Family Resource Facilitation
  - Social Skills and Other Skills Development Groups
Respondents who did not agree that students are able to meet the majority of their mental health needs identified the following barriers:

- Transportation/travel time to mental health professionals
- Lack of parental involvement or awareness of treatment options
- Financial limitations of the LEA
- Financial limitations of parent or guardian
- Lack of mental health providers in local area
- State restrictions or requirements related to providing medical services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Very significant barrier</th>
<th>Significant barrier</th>
<th>Minor barrier</th>
<th>Not a barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/travel time to mental health professionals</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parental involvement or awareness of treatment options</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial limitations of the LEA</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial limitations of parent or guardian</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of mental health providers in local area</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State restrictions or requirements related to providing medical services</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Sample Comments from Respondents

- “Public Schools are the only agency that cannot refuse services or stop treatment based on the client maximizing a therapeutic threshold. We have seen students fail a treatment program and return to school still requiring extensive mental health services which we struggle to provide.”
- “The main problem for our district is a lack of preventative services rather than crisis services. […] We also need additional evidence-based trauma-informed services to deal with youth offenders.”
- “With the significant rise in anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and self-harming behaviors in the student population (and in younger children), we need more resources to hire more mental health providers/supports. Licensed school counselors are not trained and/or legally able to provide the intensive mental health services needed in our schools to support struggling students.”
- “We have seen a significant INCREASE in mental health issues with our students including 3 student suicides in the last 6 months.”
THANKS!

▪ For input on survey development:
  – Lillian Tsosie-Jensen, State Board of Education
  – Terry Shoemaker, Utah School Superintendents Association
  – Eric Tadehara and others, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
  – B.J. Weller, Canyons School District
  – Brad Christensen, Davis School District

▪ For LEA staff and superintendents who completed the survey