

## APPENDIX

To Whom It May Concern,

10/19/22

I am writing to you about the importance of the LINK program and why I believe it should stay in school. The LINK program is important because it provides direct services to all students on site. The program also helps with families and a lot of struggles that they have.

Schools all over the country are debating whether or not to keep the LINK program in schools. The LINK program is important to high school students because it gives you the opportunity to meet other students who are struggling with the same issues that you are. It also gives you the opportunity to talk to somebody who is not a part of your family or their social group.

For many students, LINK is the most important program in the school for them. LINK is a calm place where students like to go to relax. Why take LINK out of school now if kids are used to going there? Some students trust LINK with things more than the Guidance Counselor. So to prevent certain things, I personally think LINK should stay.

The program LINK is a valuable resource for students. The program provides a safe place for students to stay after school and participate in activities that are educational and fun. They provide people that could help with your homework and provide guidance <sup>and</sup> support. LINK has been a positive influence on the lives of many students and has helped them back →

Succeed in school and life.

So if you're deciding to  
shut down link, think about how many  
students you would be letting down.

From,

A Student @ Millville Senior High School

Dear, whom ever this may concern,



Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an 11<sup>th</sup> Grade student at MPHS. Link has been around since before I started here. I've grown up in Millville lived here my whole life. Here you see things. You hear things. You experience things. Link has helped me with things I don't even wanna talk about. Without Link things at this school will change. It's not a what if anymore it's a what will happen to us without it. Link doesn't just give me a place to hide during lunch but they give everyone a chance have equal opportunity here there's no judgement. Unlike the rest of the school I can breathe and feel ok. I've experienced things like, anxiety, depression and more. There's never been a safe place for me to go to and talk about it before being here. I come here for lunch a lot and I read. I found the link bookworm and we talk about books! There is something for everyone here. Some need help some just need a place to go. Link is that place to go for help or a quiet place. What I'm trying to say is I don't want link to leave here or anywhere. If anything we need more of it. Not just for me but I have a freshman sister. She deserves the help I've been given all these years. So I help fight for Link. For her. Sincerely \_\_\_\_\_ A Girl you'll never know.

3x

## **School Based Youth Services Testimony**

Provided by David Aderhold, Ed.D.

West Windsor – Plainsboro Regional School District

Superintendent of Schools

Over the past decade I have championed the need for a robust mental health system of care for our students. Through that advocacy I have made it clear that there is a need for therapeutic mental health services available within school districts in order to meet the need of our students and families and provide direct access to clinical support.

Defunding SBYSP without consultation of the very school districts and providers that have implemented services in districts since 1987 is unfathomable.

For 62 school districts representing 91 schools, the removal of SBYSP will lead to a vacuum of services for students and communities that have relied upon these 35 year old structures. Districts will not be able to replicate the loss of services with the current 2% budget cap.

There are several premises in the NJ4S Network report that are misleading that are used to prove their argument within the report:

1. The current model supports 2% of the New Jersey's 1.4 million children. While true, this at no fault of the SBYSP model.
2. Further, there is an applied assumption that this mental health model is the only service that is provided by school districts for the other 98%. This is blatantly untrue and not representative of other mental health services that are provided by districts.
  - a. For example in Mercer County, while Ewing and Trenton have SBYSP's the additional 7 districts have partnerships

with mental health providers such as University Behavioral Health and Effective School Solutions.

3. The NJ4S report argues that the SBYSP model is inconsistent. Yes, and this was by design because in 1987 the model allowed local education agencies to work with local systems of care to develop a model that met the needs of their communities.
4. The report states that there is a lack of evidence based approaches and inconsistent operating model. First off, any program that has operated for 35 years must have data to validate their approaches. Second, the premise of the report is grounded in the assumption that if a program doesn't check the box on a federal grant application as an "evidence based approach" then the program cannot be used with federal funding.
5. The DCF stated that they underwent a "comprehensive stakeholder engagement process" which does not comport with the data presented in their report. As an example, in their own PPT presentation they stated that they "Received thirty-two responses from youth between January and March 2022"
  - One focus group with four participants
  - One focus group with three participants
  - Five individual discussions
  - Twenty survey responses"
6. Let's not forget that DCF attempted to defund SBYSP two years ago. Now, they are leveraging the COVID-19 pandemic to justify the urgency for a redesign.

So what's at stake today? 91 school sites representing a minimum of 25K – 30K students are at risk of losing their onsite counseling programs.

The School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSPP) is located in host schools and coordinate with existing resources in the community. All

youth are eligible to participate and services are provided before, during and after school. SBYSPP services include:

- mental health counseling;
- employment counseling;
- substance abuse education/prevention;
- preventive health awareness including pregnancy prevention;
- primary medical linkages;
- learning support;
- healthy youth development;
- recreation; and
- information/referral

As an example, in Long Branch, since 1988 SBYSP has been “offering safe and supportive environment to address the educational, social and emotional needs of our students and families. SBYSP provides individual counseling, group counseling, class presentations, prevention programs, family engagement, community outreach, youth development and employment preparation.”

In Pinelands, SBYSP is “designed to help young people navigate their adolescent years, finish their education, obtain skills leading to employment or continuing education, and graduate healthy and drug-free. Pinelands SBYSP promotes healthy youth development through comprehensive services that encourages social, emotional, and physical well-being.” This includes

- Individual Counseling
- Family Therapy
- Psychoeducational Groups
- Parental/Guardian Engagement Programs and Events
- Employment Services
- Crisis Intervention
- Learning Support

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- Prevention Services
- Information/Referral
- Recreation/Enrichment Activities

At Gloucester County Institute of Technology, SBYSP provides “confidential counseling and other supportive services for GCIT students.” “The staff are trained to work with a variety of issues such as stress, depression, drug and alcohol use, sexual orientation, family problems and much more”

So as a Superintendent of a school district that doesn't have SBYSP, why am I testifying today? Prior to joining WWP in 2009, I was the principal of New Brunswick High School, a school that had a robust and successful SBYSP program.

In New Brunswick, the program supported students navigate their adolescent years and support students to complete their education.” SBYSP offers the following programs in New Brunswick. A few of the services offered included:

Individual and Group Counseling

Psychoeducational Groups

Healthy Youth Development

Case Management/Family Services

Pregnancy, Teen Dating Violence, Substance Abuse, & Suicide Prevention

This current year, due to several years of inconsistency and challenges with staffing, New Brunswick Public Schools decided to bring the program in house. Essentially, they have replicated the SBYS model with district personnel to provide individual and group counseling services, professional development training, psychoeducational groups, prevention services, etc. Further, working with the Puerto Rican Action

Board the district was able to save the PIC-C program. A program that works to support teen parents with child care and parenting classes.

Let me highlight that as a principal at New Brunswick High School, I had four onsite counselors that worked with students with trauma and needing access to immediate therapeutic support. Homelessness, food instability, abuse, drugs/alcohol, sexual assault, child care, witnessing violent acts, mental health concerns such as suicidal ideations, etc. One such program was the PIC-C (Parent Infant Child Center) – 8 programs like this in NJ. Losing the PIC will lead to student drop outs. No question about it. 20 students receiving parenting training and day care for their babies (20 under 24 months).

### **WWP**

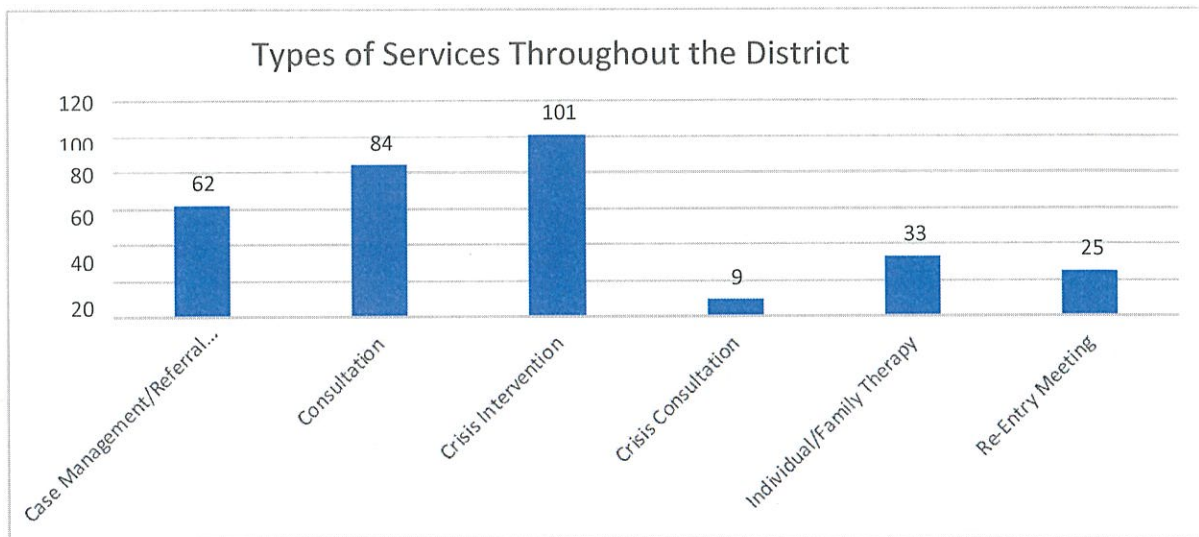
In WWP we replicated the SBYSPP program and used district funding to create the M.A.P.S. (Maximizing Adolescents Potential for Success) Program is a dynamic partnership between the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District and Rutgers – University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC). The primary objective of the program is to help assure that all students have the opportunity to obtain a range of free and confidential mental health services in schools with the overarching goal of emotional wellness. Program services include:

- Individual, group and family therapy
- Crisis Intervention & Screening
- Consultation with CST/Guidance/Teachers/Outpatient Providers
- Case Management & Referral to community resources
  - Partial Programs
  - Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP)
  - Performcare
  - Mobile Response
  - Drug & Alcohol Services
- Substance abuse prevention & intervention

8x

- Professional development workshops for school staff
- Parent education and workshops

The goals of the program are to enhance the opportunities for student learning by providing free and confidential mental health services and psychoeducation in a non-threatening environment, particularly for those that have limited access to services and instill in them hope for the future. In addition, we will work with families across all cultures and ethnicities in a way that supports their values and beliefs about wellness and health care.



□ The following is a table displaying the top 5 presenting problems at the High Schools over the last three years

| Presenting problems HSN |    |                        |    |                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|------------------------|----|-------------------------|----|
| 2019-2020 (n=40)        |    | 2020-2021 (52)         |    | 2021-2022 (n=51)        |    |
| Depressive Symptoms     | 28 | Depressive Symptoms    | 33 | Depressive Symptoms     | 39 |
| Anxiety                 | 25 | Anxiety                | 22 | Anxiety                 | 38 |
| Suicidal Thoughts       | 24 | Self-Esteem            | 20 | Self-Esteem             | 34 |
| Self-Esteem             | 21 | Suicidal Thoughts      | 16 | Suicidal Ideation       | 34 |
| Difficulty with Others  | 20 | Difficulty with Others | 16 | Self-Injurious Behavior | 16 |

9x

| Presenting problems HSS |    |                         |    |                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|-------------------------|----|-------------------------|----|
| 2019-2020 (n=44)        |    | 2020-2021 (37)          |    | 2021-2022 (n=40)        |    |
| Depressive Symptoms     | 16 | Anxiety                 | 22 | Depressive Symptoms     | 25 |
| Anxiety                 | 13 | Depressive Symptoms     | 21 | Anxiety                 | 23 |
| Suicidal Thoughts       | 12 | Suicidal Thoughts       | 13 | Suicidal Ideation       | 18 |
| Self-Injurious Behavior | 7  | Self-Injurious Behavior | 9  | Self-Esteem             | 5  |
| Difficulty with Others  | 6  | Difficulty with Others  | 7  | Self-Injurious Behavior | 4  |

**Impacts and Take-Away's:**

- The proposed defunding and redesign is a today issue, not a June 2023 problem, as news of a unilateral non-renewal of SBYSPP will cause SBYSPP staff to look for new employment.
- Any program created that is a regional HUB vs. imbedded school services is relatively worthless as it removes the clinicians from the students and counselors
- Any claim that therapists in schools is ineffective doesn't comport with the realities of what we see day-in day-out in schools
- Removing the program without providing a runway to a new program is counterproductive and destructive to the mental health support model that is currently in place
- No landscape study has been done. This term raises confusion, but studying what is in place in districts is critical in order to build a model. For example, while only two Mercer County districts have a SBYSPP program, the remaining seven districts have built partnerships with outside mental health and therapeutic agencies in order to provide similar services as SBYSPP.
- The procurement process and starting of all 15 HUBs will lead communities without mental health services
- The districts that lose clinicians will be unable to replicate services under the current funding structure

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- Students will lose critical services. The loss of access to care 25,000 – 30,000 students.
- The horrifying predictable reality a student will be hurt based upon the loss of these services.
- The legislature needs to stop this restructuring and ensure that educators, clinicians, and mental health providers are brought into the discussion
- The redesign ignores the lack of clinicians and the lack of therapeutic hospitalization bed placements.
- All Districts need funding for mental health services. We need to be able to have a budgetary allowance to exceed the 2% cap for such services.



Julie Larrea Borst  
julieborst@saveourschoolsnj.org

19 October 2022

Joint Committee on the Public Schools  
Hearing on School-Based Youth Services Programs

Thank you to the Committee for taking testimony on this important topic. I am Julie Borst, Executive Director of Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing and the Board President of the NJ Community Schools Coalition.

I first learned of the School-Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSP) being disbanded early on Friday September 30<sup>th</sup>. One of my organizers is a practitioner and sits on the Board of The Source, the SBYSP imbedded at Red Bank Regional High School.

My thought was, here we go again. Two years ago, the funding for 91 programs was cut. The backlash from students and parents was swift and loud. Funding was restored. With a 20/20 hindsight lens, perhaps the funding was restored so quickly was because there was no alternate plan in place.

Now, there is plan. There are many issues, not only with the plan itself, but how it appears Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Governor's staff arrived at the proposed new "hub and spoke" model called the NJ Statewide Student Support Service Network (NJ4S) and the way in which the proposal has been communicated with the program directors, superintendents, and the general public.

Today, you will hear from superintendents, a program director, a parent, and students. What they will share with you is very different than what has been communicated from DCF and the Governor's staff.

The first direct communication I received on the topic was on Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, from the Governor's staff. There are several talking points in the email, but what stood out to me was two of them. One described the years and large amount of funding that had gone into the creation of the Statewide System of Care, which is for more acute behavioral treatment. And the other was the assertion that this was not about defunding programs, but rather expanding access.

The latter is quite the spin, and was reiterated in meeting with the Governor's staff last week. The proposal does, in fact, defund/sunset/disband/end contracts – pick your choice of words, they've all been used to describe what will happen to the programs by DCF.

What the SBYSOs are being replaced with will not come anywhere near the level of service the students in these districts currently have. No amount of spin will make it any different.

There are claims that only having services in 90 locations is an equity issue. I would argue that removing this level of service from majority Latino, Black, and/or economically disadvantaged communities is the larger equity issue. Enough of an issue that ACLU is circulating a sign on letter to submit to DCF.

It is not true that only DCF-funded programs exist. As Dr. Aderhold testified, many districts are paying for their own mental health programs, and they are modeling them on the SBYSOs.

What we don't have is a full landscape analysis of what every district in the state is doing: Do they have a program? Who are they contracting with? How many students are being served? How many students aren't served because of lack of capacity? How much does it cost? How is it funded?

It's incredible that a statewide system is being created without having the most basic information about what exists and how the new system might support them.

There are also issues with the research being used to justify this change. Part of the spin is the assertion that 60% of students don't want mental health services in schools. A survey done by School-Based United is cited for that statistic. What is not mentioned is that the survey was done during COVID, when some schools were hybrid, some full remote.

**The survey is in no way scientific. It is not statistically valid. Nor was it created to be.** The SBYSO directors are horrified that the survey is being used this way. It was meant to be a "finger in the wind" about how students were doing and how they were accessing services. It was not unexpected to see remote choices because the students weren't in the school buildings at all at that time.

It should be noted that National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) says that teens want schools to play a big role in their mental health. Research shows that 4 in 5 students trust their teachers and other adults at their school to provide information on mental health. This is about trust and relationships.

Besides the School Based United survey, DCF employed the Center for Health Care Strategies to manage stakeholder engagement. You can find their summaries and presentations on the DCF website here: <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/fcp/sls/>

On a presentation dated March 30, 2022, there is a slide (14) about youth engagement. It references 32 students – 4 participated in a focus group, 3 participated in another focus group, 5 individual discussions, and 20 survey responses. We have asked DCF and the Governor's staff for the survey referenced here and have not gotten it. There is not mention of how many surveys were sent out, whose survey it was, nor the summary of the responses. It does appear to not be the School Based United survey which was around 5500 responses.

It is interesting to note that the following slides highlight some of the issues facing the students and their access to care. Many of them will be familiar seem to support school-based services – lack of transportation, the need for programs to lessen stigma for students and parents, flexibility to seek services during school and after, and so on.

The reason for pointing all of this out is that it seems like the research falls far short of what should be when a multi-million-dollar policy decision is being made that will directly and negatively affect at-risk students. We have no idea what criteria was used to deem some (20 of the 90) programs as "good" vs "not good."

I have forwarded to the Committee several letters from students who want their local programs to continue. I hope you will take the time to consider their thoughts.

From Millville Public Schools there is a video with students describing how their program benefits them. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8saanvbqL6M&t=1s>

One last thought. At the federal level, there is specific support for school-BASED mental health programs. The day that superintendents were told their programs were ending, the U.S. House Representatives passed H.R. 7780 The Mental Health Matters Act which would expand school-based mental health programs. The following week, the U.S. Department of Education released two grant applications. Both are for expansion of school-based mental health programs.

If support for school-based programs is where support is focused nationally, why is New Jersey doing the opposite?

As always, thank you for your time and consideration.

**Testimonial for The Joint Committee on Public Schools on The Department of Children and Families' Proposal to Dismantle the School Based Youth Services Program and Replace it with the "School Linked Statewide Network."**

Thank you Joint Committee on the Public Schools for inviting me here today. My name is Suzanne Keller, I am the Supervisor of the SOURCE and Freshman Academy at Red Bank Regional High School. I have been the Supervisor of the SOURCE for 13 years.

School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) are located in 91 host schools and coordinate with existing resources in the community. Services include: mental health counseling; education/prevention services, career development and health and wellness. All services, programs and activities are free.

The SOURCE has been serving the Red Bank Regional High School Community for over 23 years. We are funded through a grant from DCF, the Red Bank Regional Board of Education and the Source Foundation our 501c3.

Our school of 1300 students could be considered a microcosm of NJ as we are culturally, socio-economically and politically diverse.

I believe, in its current form, NJ4S would have a long term detrimental effect on the over 35,000 students currently serviced by the School Based Youth Services Program.

DCF utilized an informal survey, given by a coalition of School Based Directors known as School Based United. Formed in 2020 as a result of the potential funding cut, its purpose is to help School Based directors stay connected, while promoting the advancement and successful development of the SBYSP model.

Utilizing this survey, members of the Governor's staff and the DCF Commissioner have been reporting that 60% of students do not want mental health services in schools. In fact, the actual results showed that 66% of students wanted services provided by the SBYSP through a combination of in person and virtual services. This survey was administered in 2020-21 during the height of the Covid pandemic. It was never meant to be a statistically valid and reliable research tool to inform decision making.

There is no centralized information hub or database on how all schools in New Jersey are meeting the needs of their students today, or what their projected needs could be. Schools are utilizing outside agencies to deliver mental health services, but we don't know how many, in what capacity or how they are funding it.

DCF has failed to collect and showcase data on what the real snapshot of mental health services are in our State.

- There is no empirically based reporting system on the effectiveness of school based programs. The state continues to refer to the 35 year old School Based Youth Services Program as not being an Evidenced Based Model.

To develop a plan to become Evidence Based, School Based United formed an Evidence Based Committee. They met with Assistant Professor, Dr. Matthew Cuellar from the Department of Social Work and Child Advocacy at Montclair State University.

With his assistance the committee sought to create a foundation of standardization for all SBYSs' developing a comprehensive method to collect data, produce outcomes and inform best practice. This information was formally presented by the committee to DCF who responded, "No thank you, not at this time."

The lack of available clinicians plays a large part in the mental health crisis, especially males and professionals who are bilingual. NJ4S fails to address the clinician shortage and who would be servicing students.

As of July 1st, NJ4S will be responsible for children's well being. I question the feasibility of this timeline. How is it possible to move from RFP in early 2023 to high functioning Hubs/Spokes by September 2023? Relationships, physical spaces and a volunteer advisory board need to be formed and identified in EVERY.SINGLE.COMMUNITY.

The Federal Government is working toward School Based Youth Programs as evidenced by the House passing H.R. 7780, Mental Health Matters Act.

Funds through Fiscal Year 2022 Omnibus Appropriations and The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) provided historic funding to help meet President Biden's goal of doubling the number of school-based mental health professionals and tackling the nation's mental health crisis. This is the first of \$1 billion in Bipartisan Safer Communities Act funds over the next five years that the Department of Education will award for this purpose.

Yet, New Jersey is moving in the EXACT opposite direction. Taking school based programs out of schools. There is no concrete, culturally appropriate, language appropriate roll out plan in place to provide the multiple services that a school based program oversees day to day.

SBYSP works because they are designed to meet the needs of a community. They work because of ongoing trusted relationships with the student body, families, guardians, staff and greater school community. These trusted relationships are created by being present in the school every day. Building relationships and trust with people takes time. SBYSs are aware of the cultural needs that are present in their diverse and changing communities.

SOURCE clinicians go into health classes each marking period to educate students on Signs of Suicide, Depression, Anxiety and Eating Disorders. This can be triggering to some students.

16x

In 2017-18 (19) students identified as needing someone to talk to, in 2018-19 that number rose to (32) students, in 2019-20 the number continued to rise to (36) students and in 2020-21 (32) students were identified as needing someone to talk to. Many of these students were sent to the hospital where they were screened for suicidal ideation.

All students were assigned a SOURCE Clinician for continuity of care. Many of these students are sent home from hospitals that same day. Without our School Based clinicians how would families navigate this often confusing and complicated system?

I don't claim to have all the answers but I do know the elimination of SBYSP will leave the NJ mental health system in a deeper crisis with longer wait lists and disproportionate access to care, leaving many marginalized populations of youth without access to free, immediate, and accessible services. How many students will need to suffer or die before services are put into all schools?

It will STOP the societal normalization of mental health services, because it will no longer be part of a school community's everyday life.

Students will be forced into a one size fits all impersonal system of hubs and spokes with services delivered in off campus sites, through phone call referrals, and virtual appointments. They are already struggling to communicate. And about those virtual appointments, what about students who can't connect or have spotty wifi access? How does the state plan on ensuring access to technology and the required infrastructure needed to use it?

I was asked to testify because I am "in it" as they say. I walk this walk every day, and I am proud of the role the SOURCE plays in the advancement of mental health, collaborating with our greater community, educating and supporting families, caregivers and students but most importantly saving lives.

I am certain you recognize the impact of your decisions on 1.4 million children. Mental health is a vital component to learning, to education, to producing a whole and complete person. Please let your legacy be one of ending the stigma of mental health by providing access to mental health services in all schools.

I thank you for your time today.

# School Based United FY2021 Year End Summation

*SBU is the collection of School Based Youth Services Program staff, stakeholders, legislative and community partners, all with the common purpose of staying informed and promoting the advancement and successful development of the SBYSP fidelity model.*



June 30, 2021

## COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

Executive Co-Chair - David Seegert, MSW, LCSW - Brick SBYSP, Preferred Behavioral Health  
Executive Co-Chair - Suzanne Keller, MSW, LSW - Red Bank SBYSP, Red Bank Regional BOE

## DATA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Lauren Balkan, MSW, LCSW - Carteret SBYSP, Wellspring Center for Prevention  
Stefanie Richardson, MSW, LCSW - Pemberton SBYSP, Legacy Treatment Services

## EVIDENCE-BASED COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Janel Gonzales, MEd - Pinelands Regional SBYSP, Pinelands BOE  
Desiree Saab, PhD - Barringer H.S. (Newark) SBYSP, RWJBH

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Noel Hiers, MSW, LCSW - Cape May County Tech SBYSP, Acenda Integrated Health  
Mary Abrams, MA - Senior Policy Analyst, NJAMHAA

## BRANDING COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Suzanne Sarner, MA, LPC - Sussex Tech SBYSP, Sussex Tech BOE  
Ben Brisson, MA, LPC - South Brunswick SBYSP, Rutgers UBHC

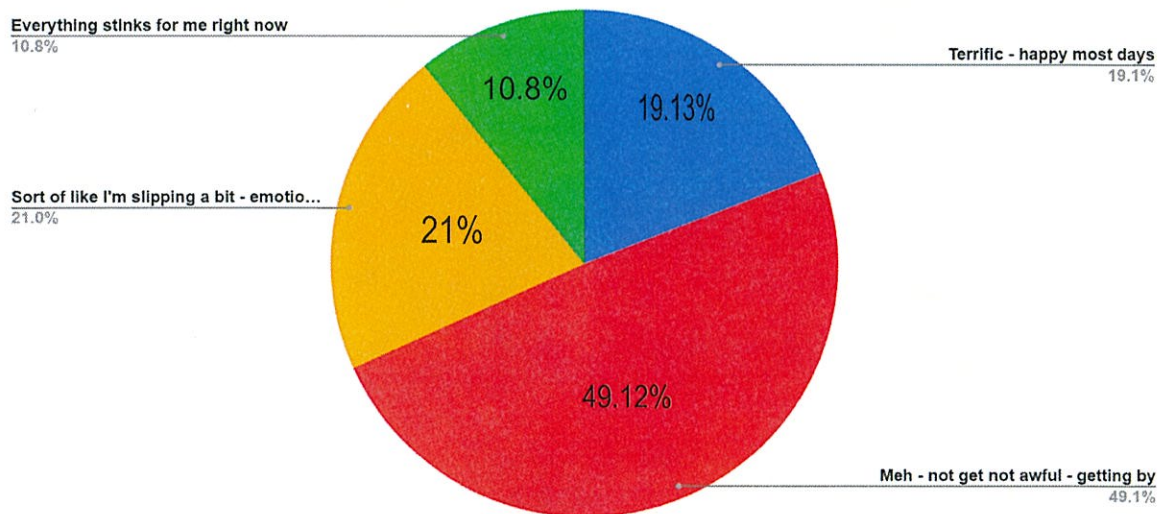
## DATA COMMITTEE

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

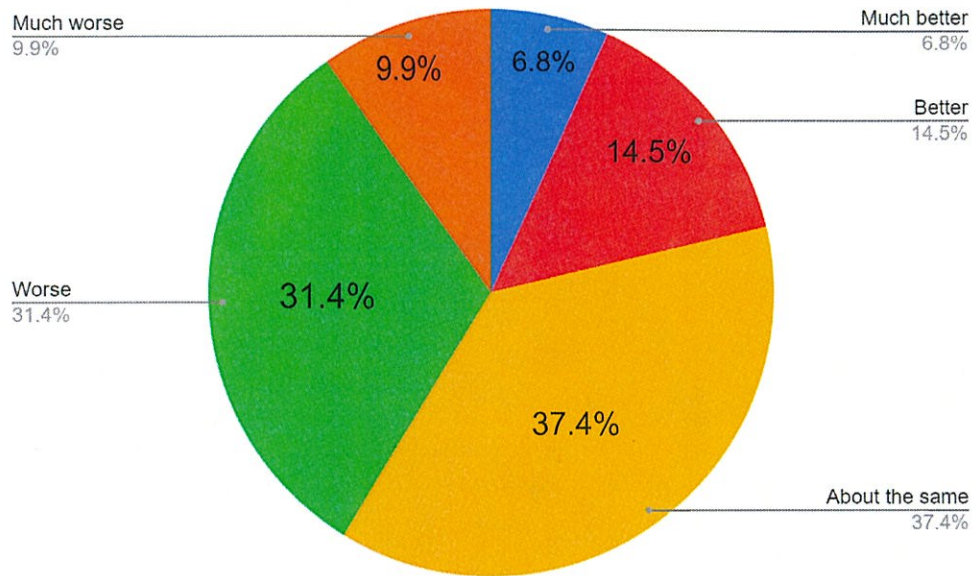
The SBU Data Committee issued a state-wide *Student Outreach Questionnaire* between the time period of 11/20/20 - 1/20/21. 5,823 student responses were compiled with the following summarized results: (For full report visit:)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-RYBBGQT57/>

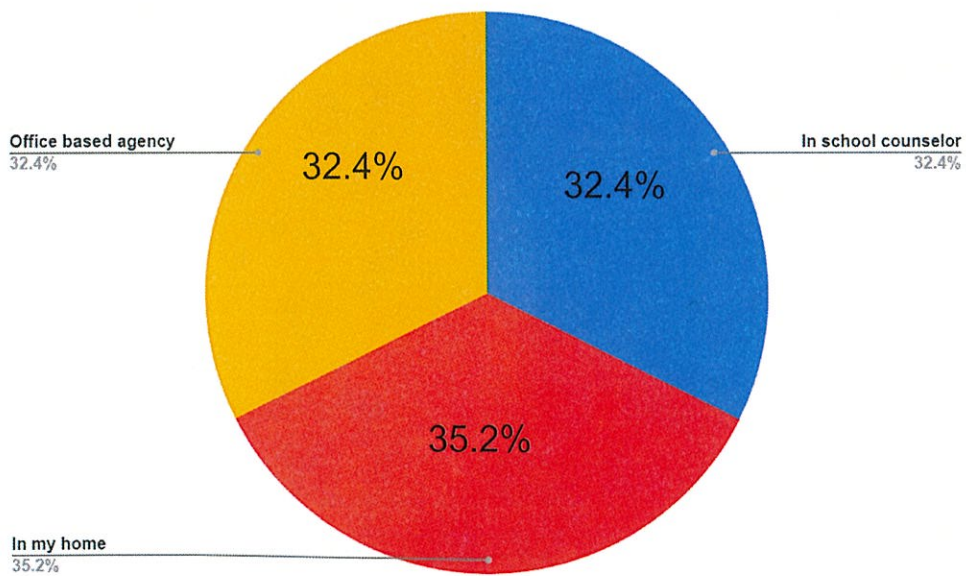
**Given COVID-19 and everything else going on, including pressure from parents/teachers, and your own moods, how would you say that you are doing at this point emotionally?**



Compared to this time last year, do you feel better, worse, or the same in terms of mood?

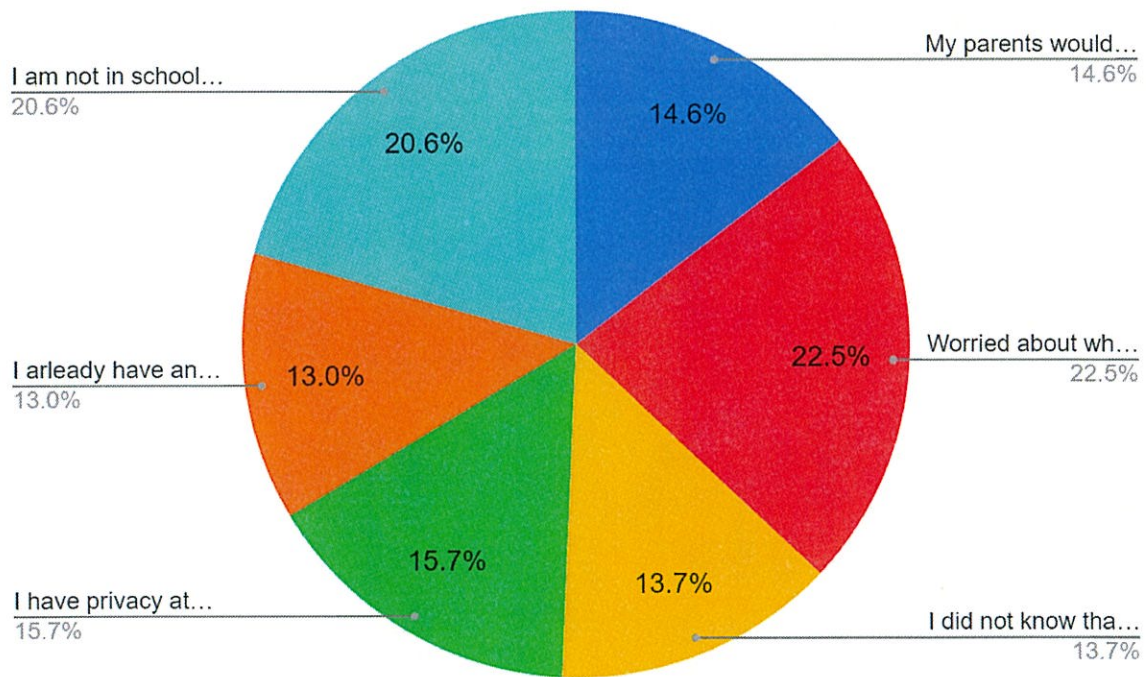


If you were to need help, where would you prefer to get support/counseling?

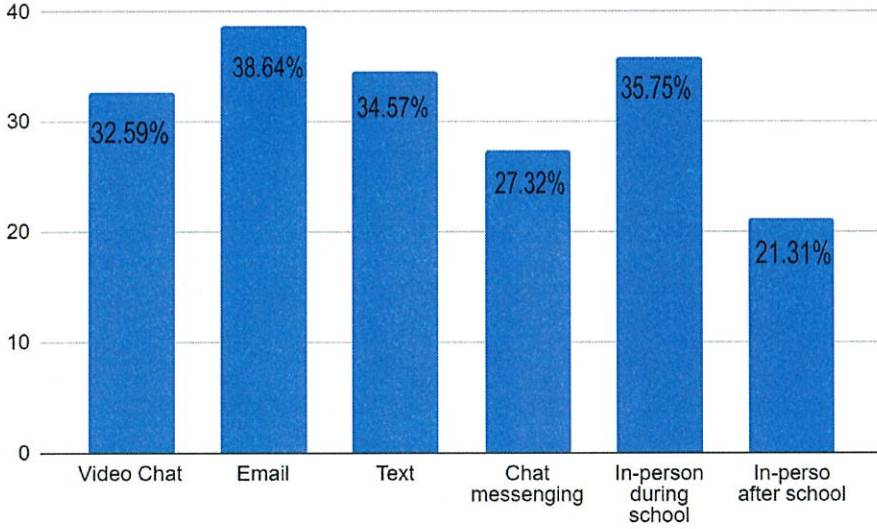


**If you have thought about getting counseling but have not, what keeps you from reaching out for support from the School Based Program? (Check all that apply)**

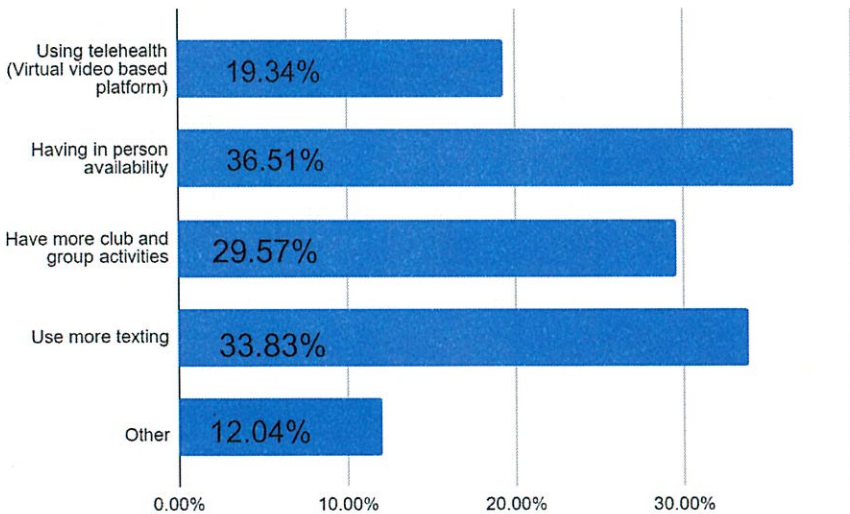
|   |      |
|---|------|
| My parents would not allow me to                                | 14.6 |
| Worried about what other people would think                     | 22.5 |
| I did not know that SBYSP counseling existed                    | 13.7 |
| I have privacy at home for virtual sessions                     | 15.7 |
| I already have an outside therapist                             | 13.0 |
| I am not in school and reaching out through technology is weird | 20.6 |



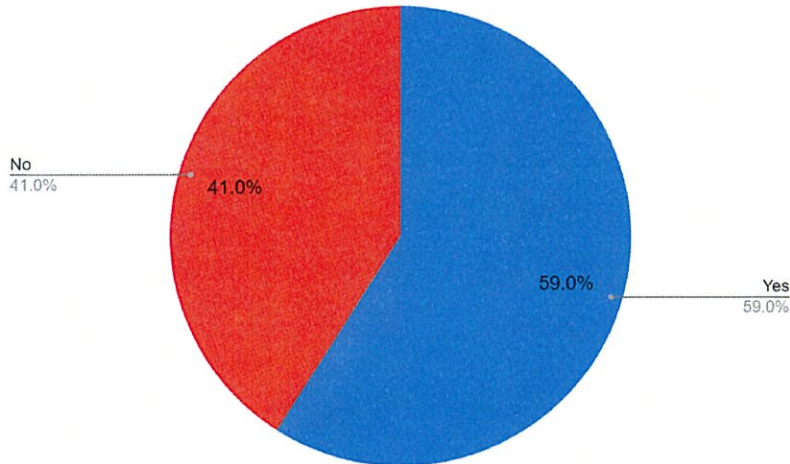
**What is your preferred method of getting services from the School Based Program? (Check all that apply)**



**What could we do to increase the likelihood of you seeking out School Based Program services? (Check all that apply)**



**Did you know that School Based Program can also help with academic support, positive recreational opportunities, college readiness, employment support, mentoring and leadership opportunities, groups?**



## DIRECTOR DRIVEN DATA

The collection of Program Directors that make-up the School Based United cohort believes that transparency is important in order to improve our process of advancing, as well as understanding the challenges of SBYSPs. During the month of March 2021, the SBU data committee issued a voluntary Site Reflection Tool, giving PD's an opportunity to provide insight and feedback into the many complex components of their individual sites. 43-total SBYSPs participated in the survey. This process was meant to guide stakeholders to better "define" who School Based Youth Services Programs are, what we do best, and where we need further support. Significant findings within this report, and full results can be reviewed at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13IFyNXy2XXUZ7LWljpHKFXFwDyZsFj1XhKSNQCiWs6l/edit#responses>

*Have you seen the needs of the students change over time, and if so, how?*

**39 responded yes** that the needs of students have changed over time.

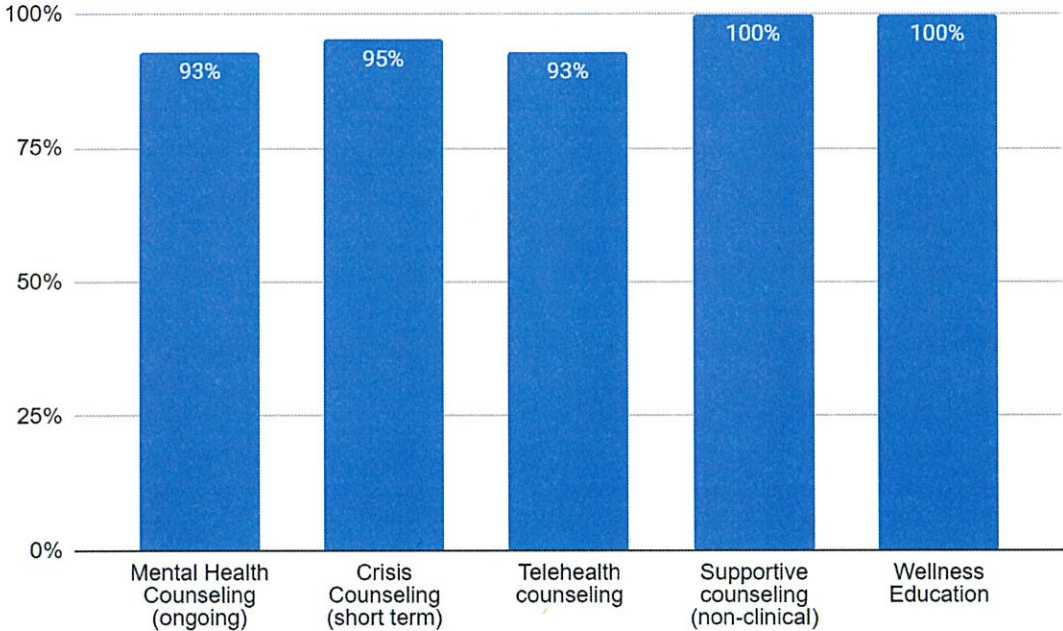
2 stated no change.

1 stated not there long enough to identify.

Comments: 26 of 39 that said yes, identified an increase for mental health services in students attending SBYSP.

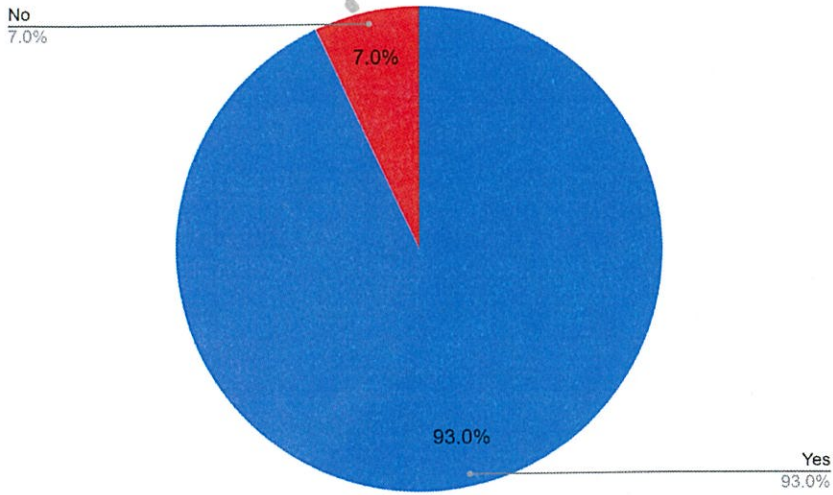
What elements are a part of your SBYSP?

43 responses



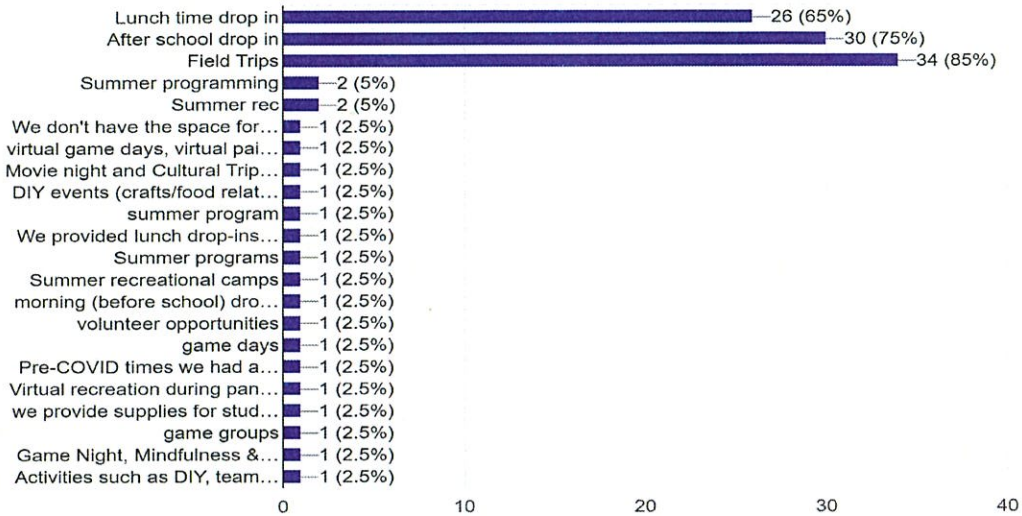
Does your SBYSP provide a positive recreational component?

43 responses



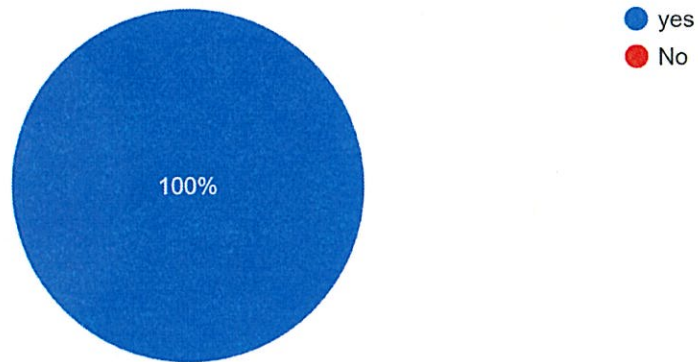
If yes, which services do you provide as part of positive recreation

40 responses



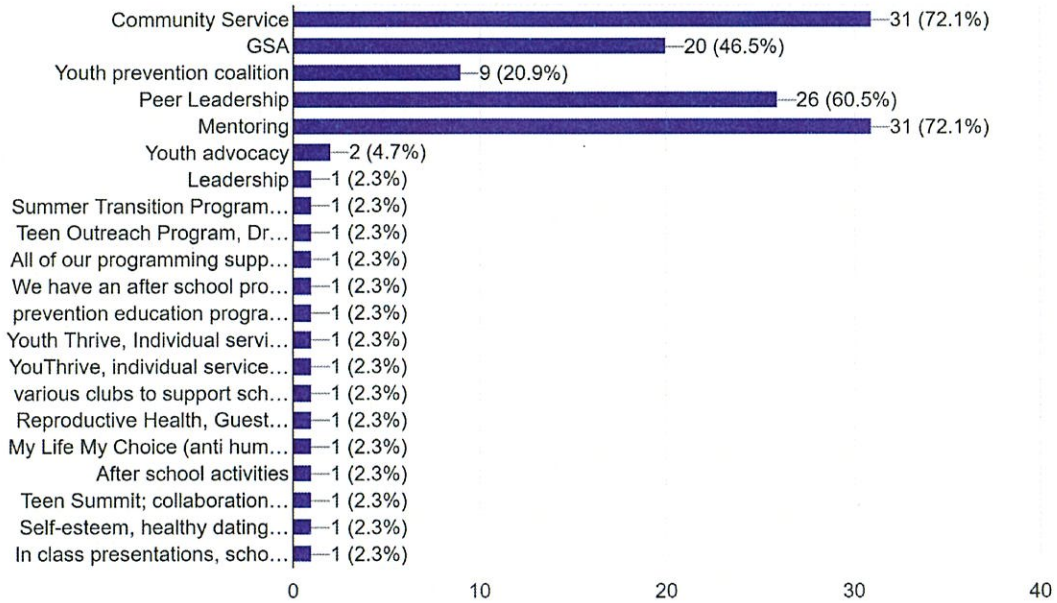
Do you provide healthy youth development

43 responses



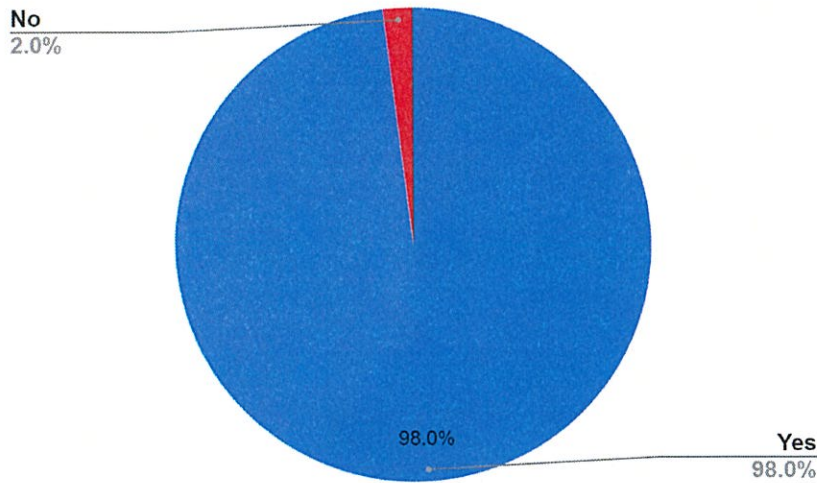
If yes, which healthy youth development activities do you offer

43 responses



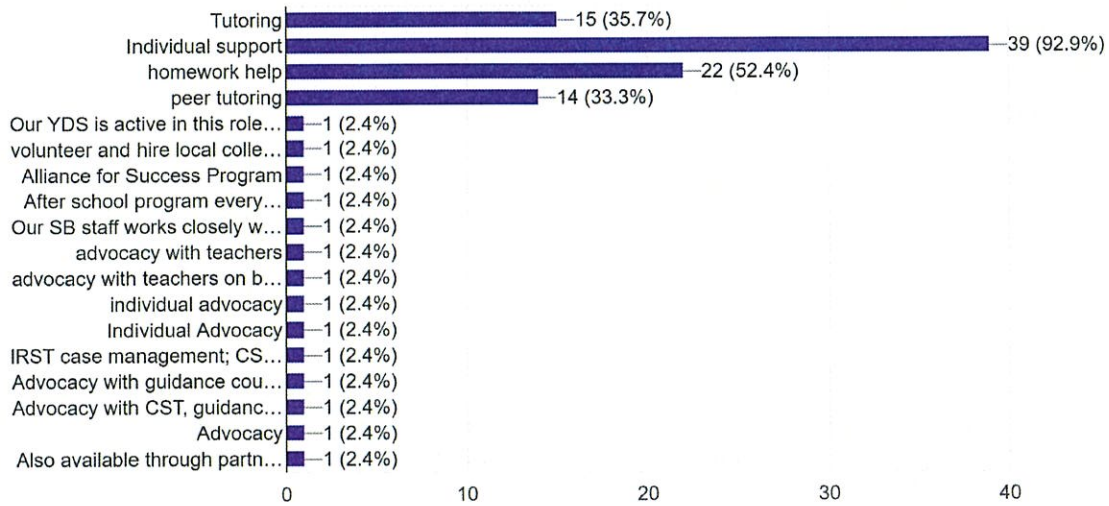
Does your SBYSP provide academic support and/or advocacy?

43 responses



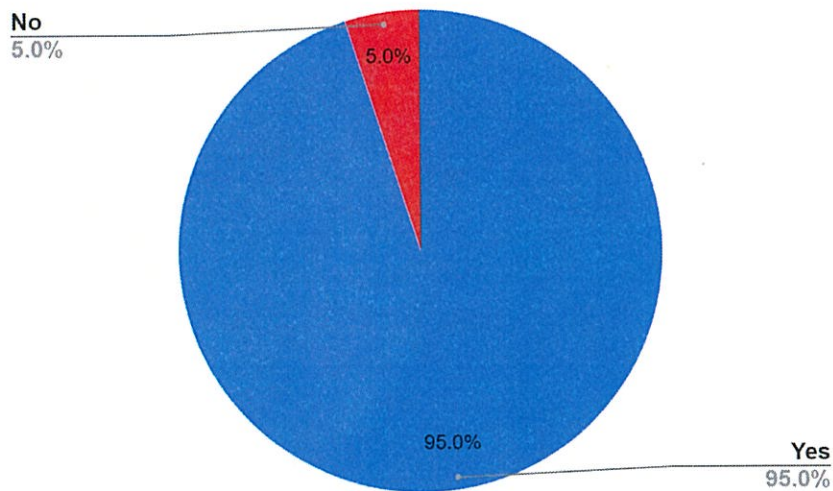
If yes, what services do you provide to provide academic support and/or advocacy

42 responses



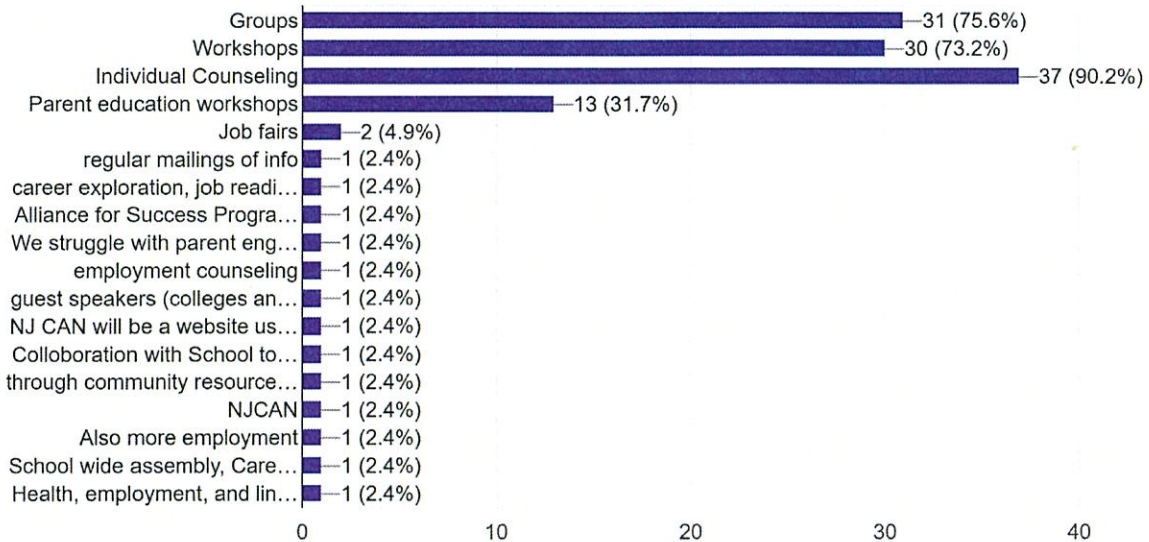
Does your SBYSP provide future planning (college/after graduation education/ employment/ job readiness.)

43 responses



If yes, which services are provided for future planning

41 responses



**For the past 2 school years prior to COVID, which core service was most critical to serving the student population at your school?**

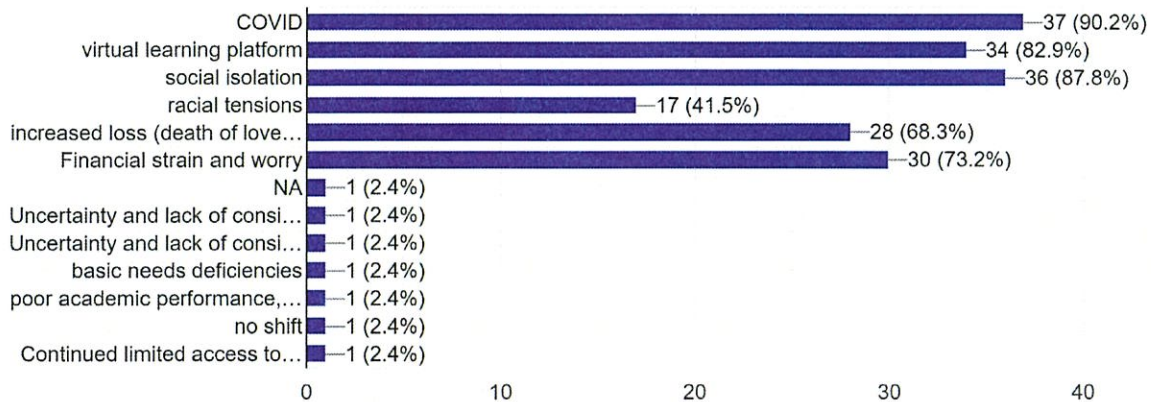
- 24 of 32 responses indicated mental health issues were the most critical need for students. Additional responses include college and career assistance, basic needs and socialization opportunities.

**Right now, which core service do you feel is most critical in serving the student population at your school?**

- 31 of 35 responses indicated mental health services. The other prevailing theme was "general student connectedness."

What factors (if any) do you feel influenced this shift?

41 responses



What do you think you do best and why? 41 responses

**Most common theme referred to offering mental health services not otherwise accessible or used by students in an outside school setting.**

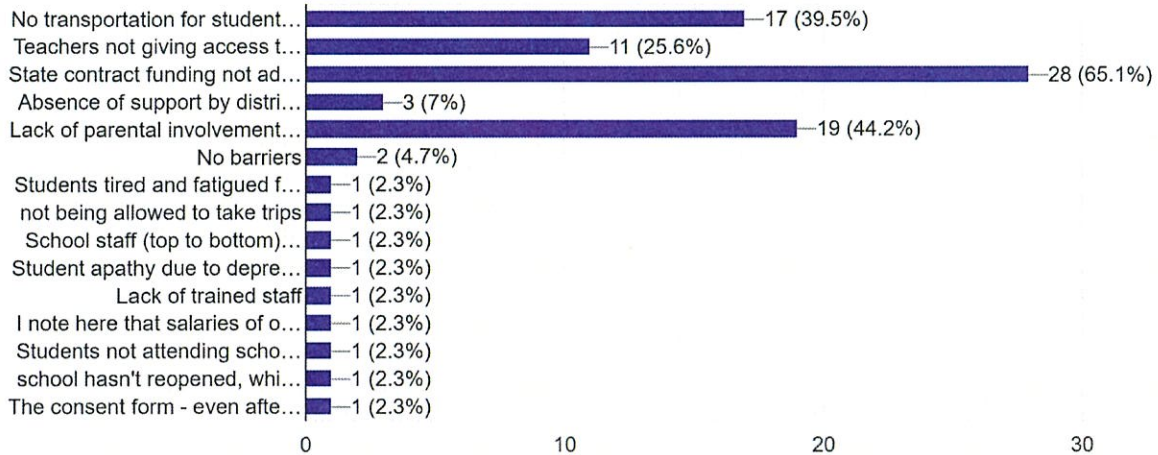
*"Connect with students and families because we are present everyday and students feel familiar with us. Our accessibility is consistent. We collaborate well with the school and local resources to meet the needs of our students and families."*

**Another common theme shared was the SBYSP ability to adapt to changing community needs in real time, before the problem gets identified and studied by outside sources.**

*"I think we adapt really well to the changing demands of the community and have always been best at leading the school community in bringing relevant programs to the population ahead of time, by thinking outside the box and staying aware of social problems before they become a major problem in our community."*

Are there any barriers for you in trying to accomplish your goals (during times before COVID)?

43 responses



What are your biggest challenges or if there was something to change in your program, what would it be? 38 responses

The most common response to this question referred to: **"Needing more staff and more funding to retain qualified staff."**

**Other examples of responses by Program Directors include:**

*"Trying to get increased family involvement."*

*"More access to students from class time, more support from district leadership when offering community programs, increased funding from State partners to sustain staffing levels and skill levels, lack of flexibility from State contracts to be able to modify service delivery and staffing in a way that makes sense for our community/agency."*

*"Our biggest challenges at the moment are lack of student participation due to the pandemic and hybrid/remote learning. Returning to providing full in-person services and having students back on campus would be the best change for our program."*

List 3 goals you would like to see your program accomplish over the next 3 years?

38 responses

Common responses included:

- *"I would like to offer evening counseling services for students and families in need of mental health support."*
- *"More integration in the middle schools, moving clinical charts to web based, sufficient staffing levels."*
- *"Shared access to empirically supported and evidence based practices to provide a comprehensive method to collect data, produce outcomes and inform best practice."*
- *1. Increase funding. 2. Become Evidenced Based. 3. Increase collaboration/communication with DCF Leadership.*
- *"Uniform branding of all SBYSP state-wide with better recognition from stakeholders."*
- *"Updated contract to reflect current model of SBYSP."*
- *"Grow the program by hiring additional Licensed professionals to meet the emerging social emotional needs of students in this building while running groups, providing professional development for staff as well as parent education presentations for the community."*

**Is there anything specific from a State, school, or agency level that would help your program be more effective in reaching your goals in future?** 34 responses

- Majority of responses included that sites need to Implement **evidence based practices , tools and a database/system that can collect such information, more collaboration from parents, genuine support from DCF administration and understanding of SBYSP needs.**
- *All responses* included the need for more COLA to support staff salaries, increased grant funding from DCF and/or DOE and enhanced communication between SBYSP sites and State leadership.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

CYRM (Child Youth Resilience Measure) tool will remain in place to help programs evaluate program service delivery effectiveness. Students will be able to participate in this survey using an electronic link for easier dissemination and data collection.

## FUTURE DATA COMMITTEE GOALS

Further collaboration with the New Jersey Office of Resiliency to implement ACE's Action Plan into the framework of School Based Youth Services Program model delivery: training, community building, service delivery.

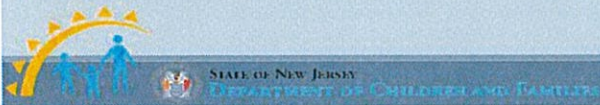
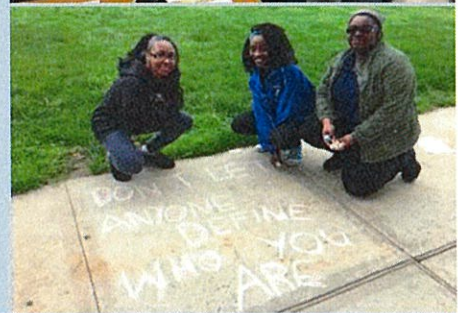
## EVIDENCE-BASED COMMITTEE

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### Mission

The mission of the SBU Evidence Based Sub-committee is to strengthen SBYSP's position as an evidence based model by adhering to an **evidence based practice process** in conjunction with improving access to and utilization of empirically supported practices. This model serves as a way to create a foundation of **standardization with autonomy** and provides a comprehensive method to collect data, produce outcomes, and inform best practice.

This process will be used to effectively address the multitude of challenges that students present. This will also serve to positively impact student resilience, well-being and mental health which will improve their ability to navigate their high school years, graduate from high school and prepare for their adult lives.



## Introduction

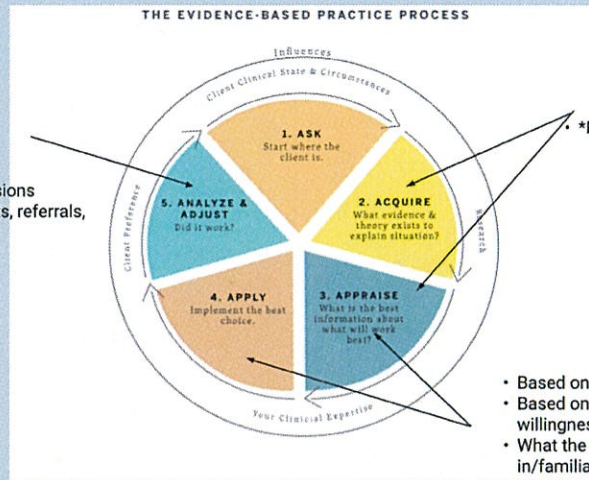
The School Based United *Evidence Based Committee* spent the FY21 hard at work. Our dedicated members met weekly for nearly 5 months. Our primary focus was to start the process of having School Based Youth Services Programs become Evidence Based. We had the privilege of connecting with Montclair State University's very own, Dr. Matthew Cuellar. Dr. Cuellar, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work and Child Advocacy and he currently teaches research methods, evidence based practice, and children and justice. His expertise and guidance quickly made the committee realize that SBYSP have the capacity to become Evidence Based by focusing on the use of an Evidence Based Practice Process.

## PLAN IN MOTION

After several discussions with members and Dr. Cuellar, the first steps were put into action. Committee members developed a survey for SBYSP to fill out and submit. This survey gathered data to determine where SBYSP are now in relation to the Evidence Based Practice Process and where we need to make adjustments.

# Where We Are At Now?

- Student interviews
- Biopsychosocial intake
- Surveys and scales
- Referrals
- School reports
- CYRM
- Student feedback/follow-up sessions
- Other collateral feedback (parents, referrals, etc.)
- \*Room for improvement?



\*Possible gap in process

- Based on students' needs
- Based on student and family willingness for tx
- What the staff are specialized in/familiar with EBP Process as recommended by state and/or organization




STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The committee then focused their energy on developing a presentation for DCF leadership in the hopes of gaining their approval to move forward with our endeavor with SBYSP becoming Evidence Based. Our proposal was presented to DCF leadership on March 17, 2021.

### NJ DCF


## School Based Youth Services Program: An Evidenced Based Model



Autonomy Standardization

### What are the benefits?

- SBYSP to become an evidence-based model that can be replicated across all systems and programs
- This method of identifying appropriate intervention methods can bolster resiliency (CYRM outcomes)
- Innovative and creative interventions become standardized.
- Respects the autonomy of each program to address client needs with a standardized approach: Autonomy with standardization
- Outcome informed (Ability to use outcomes and data to inform decisions)
- Data shows the work being done as well as outcomes
- Data helps identify commonly used interventions
- Data helps to identify future needs/programming including potential for diverse funding opportunities



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

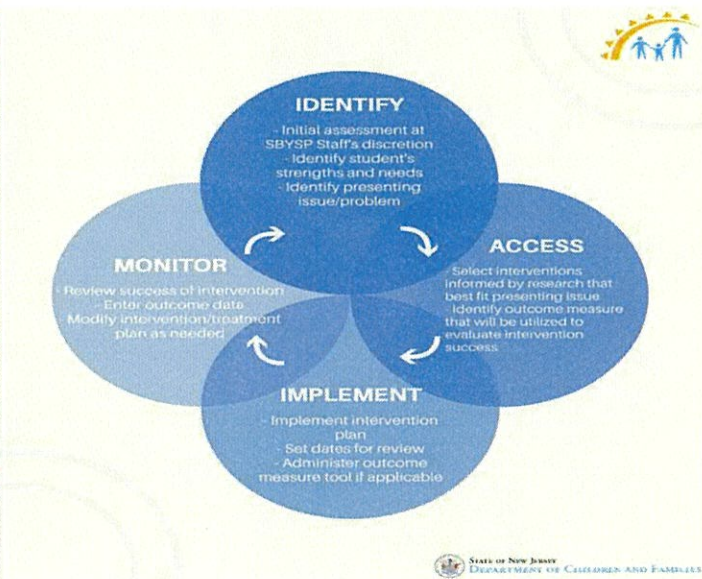
## THE SBYSP TOOLKIT

*Evidence-based programs for School-based Youth Services*

This toolkit serves two main purposes:

1. Streamlines engagement in EBP at practitioner level
2. Allows for external program evaluation to ensure process is followed at administrative level

- Data is captured in real-time
- Data can be used as SSD or in aggregate to analyze trends by group, school, program, region, or across SBYSP



## FUTURE EVIDENCE-BASED COMMITTEE GOALS

After several follow up emails and a conversation with DCF leadership, we were advised to pause these efforts until after the stakeholders process committee can convene regarding studying the model and next steps for SBYSP. The Evidence Based Committee

has paused this effort at DCF request and have temporarily shifted focus on other efforts that will validate/prove the efficacy of the work done through SBYSP. It is our intention to stay connected to the invaluable partnership we have established with Dr. Cuellar (Montclair State University) and we look forward to the next steps in continuing to make NJ School Based Youth Services Programs stronger than ever.

## BRANDING COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The purpose and scope of work from this committee is to develop uniformity in terms of how SBYSP sounds, looks, and operates across all 21 counties. A major focus was on branding our image in order to be identified by stakeholders from all regions as well as have a comprehensive and cohesive “elevator pitch” to the community. During FY21 our findings included:

Universal messaging using the Instagram platform handle: **@NJ\_SBYSP**

All messaging content should be linked with the following hashtags to ensure linkages to other SBYSPs:

- #SBYSP
- #DCF
- #safehealthyconnected
- #NJSBYSP

A comprehensive list of all SBYSP social media account handles was collected and disseminated and SBU members were encouraged to follow each other on all sites: Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc.

- *Social media posts are not a replacement for therapy and should not be substituted for therapy or crisis intervention.*

Suggested uses for social media connection across all sites include, but not limited to:

- Photos of your offices / Introduction to staff

- Mindful/Meditation Monday, Wellness Wednesday, Thankful Thursday, etc.
- Your School's Events
- SBYSP-Related Events
- Events, programs, or opportunities related to your managing agency/organization
- Local Community Happenings
- Student Accomplishments & Testimonials (with consent)
- Calendar of Events
- Awareness Month Initiatives
- Positive Quotes/Affirmations
- Coping Skills + COVID resources

## SBYSP MISSION STATEMENT

Universal messaging from SBYSP across the state is imperative when communicating with community and legislative stakeholders. This committee recommends all sites use consistency regards to using the same mission statement as listed on the DCF - OSLS web-site as embedded within email signatures, marketing materials, school reporting, fundraising, and posted within program descriptions:

***Our mission is to implement prevention and intervention programs that are comprehensive, multifaceted, and build on the strengths of young people and assist them in achieving their educational and life goals.***

## BRANDING IMAGE

This committee understands the importance of SBYSP being recognized visually. Stakeholders should easily be able to identify the SBYSP logo no matter where they live or travel throughout New Jersey. Whether worn by students on merchandise, printed on letterhead, embossed on business cards, displayed on web-sites and social media pages, a logo is the program's first identifier that connects the community to program recognition.

An anonymous poll was issued over the course of a 2-month period state-wide to students, staff, stakeholders with 3 professionally designed logos. The one shown below won with a unanimous 60% vote:



## **FUTURE COMMITTEE GOALS**

The future of branding communications across SBYSP should remain focused on all programs using the same universal messaging in all marketing brochures, communications, and branding merchandise. @NJ\_SBYSP should be connected with each individual Instagram site and social media handles should continuously be connected with DCF. SBYSP contracts should reflect support and authorization for using the cohesive mission statement and logo for any existing or new SBYSPs to maintain a consistent and recognizable program.

## **LEGISLATIVE-ADVOCACY-PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE**

### **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

The purpose of the LAP committee was to continue building a strong network of public and private stakeholders that remain committed to expanding and advancing the work and success of SBYSP.

Monthly updates were sent to the New Jersey legislature showcasing the work of a particular SBYSP that month. Frequent communication was made with local elected officials about the accomplishments of SBYSP within their district and inviting them to participate in *Community Liaison Board* meetings.

Much of the work done within this committee collaborated with the advocacy efforts of NJAMHAA (New Jersey Association for Mental Health and Addiction Agencies). Many significant connections were made that helped provide information, education, and advocacy to community and political leadership on behalf of SBYSP.

Any list of achievements by the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) in regard to the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) in FY2021 must begin with the tremendous win of restoring full funding in the FY2021 Revised Budget in September 2020. While NJAMHAA kicked off those efforts, it truly was all the School Based United (SBU) members that ran with it, engaging so many in all of their communities. The awareness about SBYSPs raised during that campaign is truly invaluable! That heightened awareness has most definitely assisted in NJAMHAA's subsequent advocacy efforts on behalf of SBYSPs.

Other achievements during this period include:

- Establishment of NJAMHAA's SBYSP Subcommittee
- Bringing on several SBYSP programs as new NJAMHAA members
- Receiving a commitment from Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer to include stakeholders in a new workgroup to review the SBYSP model
- Having a bill supporting an alternative pilot school based program pulled from a Committee calendar by its sponsor (Sen. Ruiz), and
- Having Senator Ruiz submit a budget resolution that provides a \$5 million increase to SBYSP!

## FUTURE COMMITTEE GOALS

As the year ends, NJAMHAA is currently working to level the playing field for community based providers in the application process for new SBYSPs by asking Governor Murphy to conditionally veto A4435. Regardless of the outcome of this particular effort, our strong, years-long advocacy on behalf of SBYSPs will continue throughout FY2022!

**Contact:** For more information regarding the work of School Based United or to get involved with our network, please contact Executive Committee Chair:  
David Seegert, Brick School Based Program Director - Preferred Behavioral Health Group  
[dseegert@brickschools.org](mailto:dseegert@brickschools.org) - 732-785-3000 ext. 2095

101 RIDGE ROAD  
LITTLE SILVER, NJ 07739

hope. empowerment. success

**THE SOURCE**

732-842-8000 EXT. 1-236  
THESOURCERBRHS.ORG

**AT RED BANK REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

A School Based Youth Services Program

Suzanne Keller  
Supervisor, The SOURCE &  
Freshman Academy  
Red Bank Regional High School  
732-842-8000 Ext. 1-236

42x

**Red Bank Regional High School  
School Report Card: 2020-2021  
Enrollment Trends by Student Group**

Student Body-1247

3 Sending Districts/15 OOD

54.8% White

37.1% Latino

5.3% African American

1.8% Asian

29.1% Free and Reduced Lunch

hope. empowerment. success

**THE SOURCE**

**AT RED BANK REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

A School Based Youth Services Program

**thesourcerbrhs.org**

## **The Source Mission:**

The SOURCE is committed to supporting the mental health, well-being, and educational success of all students.

We build public and private partnerships to ensure quality services that are effective, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the diverse, changing needs of students and their communities.

All services are provided on site at Red Bank Regional High School.

All services are free of charge.

44x

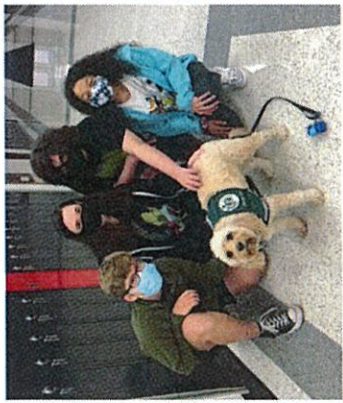
# What we do IN SCHOOL & in the Community

hope, empowerment, success

## THE SOURCE

AT RED BANK REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL  
A School Based Youth Services Program

[thesourcerbrhs.org](http://thesourcerbrhs.org)



### EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- Student, parent and community educational presentations and forums take place throughout the school year in both large and small group settings.
- Signs of Suicide Education (All RBRHS students)
- Summer Slam: Four-week transition program for incoming freshmen (2.5 credits awarded)
- Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention
- Pregnancy Prevention Education
- College Essay Writing Assistance
- Community Tutoring Program
- LGBTQIA Educational Awareness
- Scholarship Opportunities for All Students
- Teen Outreach Program (TOP)
- Kroon Scholarship Program for Latino students



### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

High school can be hard and The Source is here to listen and help.

We Offer:

- Individual, Group, Family, Crisis & Bilingual Counseling
- Certified Therapy Dog



### INTEGRATED SCHOOL SERVICES PROGRAM

In partnership with Integrated Care Concepts and Consultation (ICCC), this program aims to benefit students with private insurance. Privately insured students can schedule one to one sessions with a LCSW during or after school. Counseling sessions take place at RBRHS. To learn more about ICC visit: [www.integratedcareconcepts.com](http://www.integratedcareconcepts.com).



### HEALTH & WELLNESS

Basic needs and overall wellness (both physical and mental) are paramount to a successful day at school.

We Provide:

- Food Pantry
- Personal Hygiene Products
- School Supplies
- Preventative Healthcare
- Dental & Optical Screening & Services
- Recreational & Cultural Activities
- Social Emotional Learning



### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We help kids find employment through:

- Resume Writing
- Interviewing Skills
- Employment Board
- Job Search

45x

## Funding and Growth:

- ❖ Grant provided by DCF:
- ❖ RBRHS BOE provides salaries, benefits, space
- ❖ Year/Year increase as counselors move up teacher pay scale
- ❖ The Source Foundation, our non-profit 501 (c)3 organization
  - Provides ancillary funds for programs, materials, speakers
  - Markets the Source to the general public as well as internally

## How we do it:

This is accomplished through best practices in comprehensive counseling services, prevention programming, advocacy, academic support, employment services, family engagement, basic need fulfillment, free public education/forums, and collaboration with community partners.

47x

# Source Staff

- ❖ 3 Full Time Licensed Social Work Clinicians
- ❖ 1 Full Time Licensed Bi-Lingual Clinician
- ❖ 1 Male Licensed Clinician
- ❖ 4 Interns
  - 3 MSW Interns (Fordham, Seton Hall, Stockton)
  - 1 BSW Intern (Rutgers)
- ❖ 1 Secretary

# Community Partnerships:



Turning Lives Around, Inc.



**Lunch Break**  
HELP FOR TODAY • HOPE FOR TOMORROW



project  
**write now**



**MHA**  
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

**HABCORE**  
HOUSING THE HOMELESS  
MONMOUTH AND OCEAN COUNTIES



Care. No matter what.

Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central, and Southern New Jersey



**Covenant House**  
New Jersey

**PREVENTION FIRST**  
*building community capacity to prevent substance abuse*



**SOCIETY for the PREVENTION of TEEN SUICIDE**

THE JBJ SOUL FOUNDATION  
**JBJ SOUL KITCHEN**  
*Community Restaurant*



**OCEAN'S HARBOR HOUSE**



TIGGER STAVOLA FOUNDATION  
DRUG PREVENTION AND EDUCATION  
EST. 2013

49x

# Why it works: Trusting Relationships

Students see counselors in the hallways, cafeteria and in classrooms, every day at school. Relationships are formed. Students can come into the SOURCE to take a break from the drama in the cafeteria, during a study period, by appointment or if there is an emergency.

Access to a counselor is as simple as walking through the door. Real time, in person, on demand counseling.

A change in behavior or appearance is easily identified in a school setting. Several referrals come from:

- Self Referral
- Friends
- Faculty/Staff
- Parent Request
- Guidance
- Assistant Principal's Office

## Pre-CoVid 2018-2019

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Total Participants: | 400  |
| Total Sessions:     | 3337 |
| Total Hours:        | 2257 |
| ● Mental Health     | 336  |
| ● Healthy Youth Dev | 236  |
| ● Learning Support  | 153  |
| ● Medical           | 39   |
| ● Pregnancy Prev Ed | 47   |
| ● Preventive Health | 52   |
| ● Substance Abuse   | 42   |
| ● Employment        | 33   |

## 2021-2022

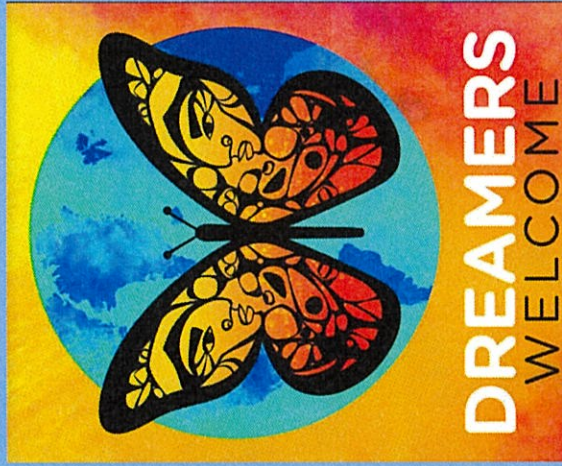
|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Total Participants: | 415  |
| Total Sessions:     | 3395 |
| Total Hours:        | 2478 |
| ● Mental Health     | 381  |
| ● Healthy Youth Dev | 234  |
| ● Learning Support  | 181  |
| ● Medical           | 8    |
| ● Pregnancy Prev Ed | 49   |
| ● Preventive Health | 56   |
| ● Substance Abuse   | 67   |
| ● Employment        | 64   |

# Participants by service category

# Source run groups/activities occur during the school day or after school



 mindfulness  
connection

The logo for Ridge Road Run (RRR) features the letters "RRR" in a large, stylized, blue font. Below it, the text "RIDGE ROAD RUN" is written in a smaller, blue font.

3 schools \* 1 mission  
suicide prevention

The logo for Ridge Road Run Connection (RRC) features the letters "RRC" in a green, stylized font.

Red Bank  
High School  
High School

The logo for SOURCE (Source of Understanding and Outreach for Youth) features the word "SOURCE" in a bold, black font with a red outline.

Red Bank  
High School  
High School

The logo for Powers features a stylized red and white figure.

Red Bank  
High School  
High School



3 schools \* 1 mission  
suicide prevention



Red Bank  
Catholic  
High School



Red Bank  
Regional  
High School



Rumson-Fair Haven  
Regional  
High School

Ridge Road Run Ambassadors are committed to ensuring suicide prevention education, mental health/wellness initiatives and raising general awareness of suicide and mental health within their schools and greater school communities.

**Friends and Family February Check in Challenge**  
 Follow the Source and Ridge Road Run for 28 days!  
 Pledge to reach out to one person a day/for 28 days!  
 1 time a week post a picture of friends or family  
 Tag Ridge Road Run and The Source  
 Use hash tags:  
 #RidgeRoadRun  
 #RidgeRoadRun2021  
 #endgenocide2021  
 #youarecatholic  
 #youarecatholic

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>BE KIND</b>       | <b>HOLD ON TO HOPE</b> |
| <b>NEVER GIVE UP</b> | <b>You Matter</b>      |

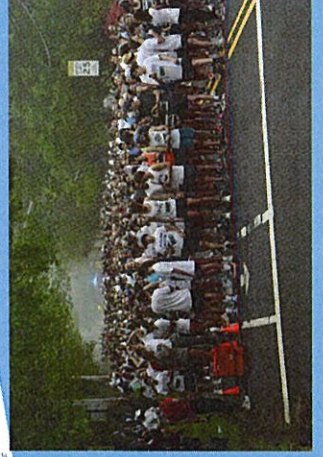
**YOU MATTER OUT**  
 RBC vs RFH 10/21  
 Limited Addition Shirts-Orders CLOSE 10/14!  
 RBC students check your email  
 RFH students visit "class" google classroom

- ★ Awareness at school activities/sports
- ★ Tabling in schools
- ★ Giveaways
- ★ Morning Announcements/Videos
- ★ Student/Community presentations
- ★ Social Media @RidgeRoadRun
- ★ Annual 5K

An evening with *Shawn*  
 Hear Shawn's story of triumph and tragedy around substance abuse. Learn how to help students make healthy life choices, overcome adversity and set goals.

October 12, 2022  
 7-8:30 PM  
 Free and open to public.  
 Register here:  
<https://shawmetzrbhc.eventbrite.com>

Sponsored by:



**Help Your Student Reach Their Next Level**  
 Join us for an evening with author & motivational speaker, **Denard Mitchell**, author of **Next Level Student Success: Practical Ways to Achieve Success in School and in Life**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14<sup>TH</sup> at 7:00PM**  
 at the Red Bank Regional High School Auditorium  
 PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/#!/event/139044102444997>  
 #RRR #SOURCE #RRR

53x

# Signs of Suicide Program

- ❖ Began in 2004 as a result of an RBR student who died by suicide
- ❖ State mandated Suicide Prevention Education in Health Classes in 2005
- ❖ Curriculum is developmentally appropriate based on age
- ❖ Delivered by Source Counselors in Health Education Classrooms
- ❖ Supplemented by Attitudes in Reverse and Minding your Mind presentations

## Signs of Suicide Stats

- ❖ 2015-2016: 17 students
- ❖ 2016-2017: 27 students
- ❖ 2017-2018: 19 students
- ❖ 2018-2019: 32 students
- ❖ 2019-2020: 36 students
- ❖ 2020-2021: 32 students

## Source Crisis Referrals to Hospital or Mobile Response

- ❖ 2015-2016: 39 students
- ❖ 2016-2017: 52 students
- ❖ 2017-2018: 58 students
- ❖ 2018-2019: 40 students
- ❖ 2019-2020: 25 students (CoVid)
- ❖ 2020-2021: 22 students (Hybrid)
- ❖ 2021-2022: 45 students

# Every School needs a Certified Therapy Dog

- ❖ Riley Keller
- ❖ Born 2/13/18
- ❖ Up to date on all vaccinations
- ❖ Has hair not fur making him hypoallergenic
  - ❖ Licensed Certified Therapy Dog
  - ❖ AKC Certified Canine Good Citizenship



# School Based Approach VS. NJ4S:

| SBYSP  | NJ4S                                      |
|--|---|
| 91 Programs/35,000 students                                      | 15 Vicinages/1.4 M Students               |
| Located in school buildings                                      | Hubs and Spokes                           |
| 35 years experience  | Zero years experience                     |
| No transportation required                                       | Transportation required                   |
| In person on demand mental health services                       | Referral based                            |
| Safe space in school building                                    | Locations TBD                             |
| Immediate response and ongoing crisis intervention               | Referral based                            |
| Students meet with trusted adults with established relationships | Students Meet with people they don't know |
| Summer Programming   | Referral/TBD                              |
| Established Community Advisory Board                             | Find volunteers for Advisory Board        |

50x

**Support School Based Youth Services  
Programs because.....**

**School Based Saves Lives!**

**Thank you for your time.**

School Based Youth Services Program  
Harrison High School  
401 Kingsland Avenue  
Harrison, NJ 07029  
Tel (973) 482-5050, Ext. 1630

October 15, 2022

**The Honorable Governor Philip D. Murphy**

Governor of New Jersey  
The State House  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

I am writing this letter regarding the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) at Harrison High School that will be replaced by the "Hub and Spoke" model, as proposed by the Department of Children and Families. It is my understanding that the SBYSP will terminate its services to the students and families of Harrison effective 6/30/23.

In September of 2000, the Harrison School District applied, demonstrated community need, and received funding for the SBYSP. It was an honor to be appointed as the Program Director. For the last twenty-two years, my staff and I have worked diligently to ensure the program remains an asset to our community. During the last few weeks, I have been asked if my motivation to advocate keeping the SBYSP open throughout the State of New Jersey is personal, and without hesitation, my answer is yes. It is very personal. It is so personal that I declined a higher paying position in a wealthier district because I believe in the efficacy of the model. I also chose to return to work in Harrison, as it would give me the opportunity to give back to my community.

As an immigrant of Portugal, I experienced the displacement and anxiety that most of our newly arrived students experience upon entering our school doors. I watched my mother struggle as she tragically became a widow at the age of 39, in a foreign country, all while trying to navigate the educational system with three children. I watched my brother struggle with learning the English language and ultimately dropping out of school to help provide for my family. I endured judgment from peers who did not understand that my black outfits were not a fashion statement; I was simply following my cultural tradition of mourning my father's sudden death. Imagine how different my family's situation would have been if we had advocates and resources in our schools to help cope with such events.

I made a very personal decision to work in an environment that would help prevent other students from similar experiences. In the last twenty-two years, I have had the privilege of working alongside a dedicated team who work feverishly to provide direct and indirect services to the students and families of Harrison High School. This includes providing emotional support to a fourteen year old teen mom, struggling with displacement, isolation and post-partum depression, all while trying to complete her education (please see attached letter). We have provided emotional support at funerals to students who struggled with the traumatic death of parents, siblings, peers and teachers. I have accompanied traumatized students to the church

GoX

to provide a "run through" of what to expect during a funeral, to minimize the level of trauma to the student. We have saved countless students who trust us enough to knock on our doors to report physical and/or sexual abuse, suicidal ideation or substance abuse in the home. Some students are brave enough to share their traumatic experiences of gun violence in their native countries and the unimaginable journey they undertook before arriving at our schools. The SBYSP at Harrison High School is such an integral part of our community, that we are now providing support to a second generation of students. Former participants are now seeking services for their children, knowing the direct impact we had on their own adolescence. It is the genuine relationships we have developed with our students and families that enables them to entrust our staff with the struggles they are facing.

The SBYSP staff at Harrison are reflective of the community, fluent in Portuguese and Spanish. As newly arrived foreign students and parents arrive in our school, the SBYSP staff is ready to receive them and provide them with the support they need to navigate a foreign school system.

The SBYS programs throughout the State of New Jersey have been criticized for not providing a one size fit all approach. Ironically, this is the greatest strength of the SBYSP model, as each program responds to the immediate need of their community. We are all very aware that the geographical and socio-economical needs of our state are expansive. The needs of my students in Harrison will be drastically different to those of students in Salem County. Historically, our program adjusts our services based on the immediate need of our community. For instance, the recent wave of students arriving from Brazil demonstrated a need for services. We quickly expanded our support groups for Spanish speaking students, and created similar groups for Portuguese speaking students. These groups are essential for helping students, some with traumatic childhoods, to acclimate and succeed in our schools.

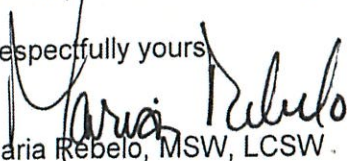
The "wrap around" services such as prevention workshops, tutoring and recreational activities are all a source of promoting relationships in our schools. It is the ping-pong match with a student that helps him be brave enough to tell us his parent is dying or the family is in need of food. Anyone versed in basic psychology knows that "we are to meet clients where they are at". That is the heart of the SBYSP. We meet our students where they are at, providing resources and support for their immediate needs. More importantly we are in the student's safe environment where a minute in the life of a teen can be life altering.

As a mental health professional, I also recognize myself as an expert of my community. I am aware that many of our families will not be receptive to services outside of Harrison, as they will mostly likely need to travel to Jersey City for support. In addition, our culturally diverse community is reluctant to trust those outside of their immediate community. Many of our working parents will be forced to miss work, resulting in economic hardships for our families. Unfortunately, this will result in many of our students remaining silent in the classroom. I fear that the progress we have made in recognizing adolescent mental health and the need for intervention will revert to the days where families like mine suffer in silence.

I have attached several letters of support from our current and former students for your perusal.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and consideration in keeping SBYSP in our schools.

Respectfully yours,

  
Maria Rebelo, MSW, LCSW

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## **“The Heart of School Based Youth Service Programs Is the Lack of Bureaucracy”**

School Based Youth Service Programs have provided services to the youth of New Jersey for 35 years. Although programs meet the needs specific to their districts, the programs all provide the same core services, including individual, family and group counseling. The Harrison School Based Youth Services Program has been a well-integrated part in the community of Harrison since September of 2000. The program has consistently provided immediate and direct services to our students and families of Harrison High School. Students, families, faculty and administration have utilized our support services, free of charge and bureaucratic obstacles.

### **Benefits of Operating the SBYSP at Harrison High School**

The Harrison School District is a multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse community. The current school enrollment is as follows:

Total Enrollment (K-12) 2092 – Harrison High School 715

Special Education Students (K-12) 380 – Harrison High School 94

English Language Learners (K-12) 460 – Harrison High School 147

Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch – 79%

SBYSP is a full wrap around program, which provides free and confidential individual, family and group counseling. In addition, SBYSP provides academic support, employment counseling, social skills development opportunities, and recreational/cultural opportunities for students of Harrison High School.

SBYSP staff are reflective our community, are fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, and well versed in our community needs, therefore are able to respond to respond accordingly. We have served multiple generations of Harrisonians. Parents and family members know and seek our services on a regular basis.

### **Fostering Relationships**

The SBYSP service model helps facilitate trust with administration, faculty, family and students – enables staff to provide onsite, ***immediate response to student needs***. Teenagers can be **impulsive by nature**. **Providing immediate/consistent response to their emotional/psychological/social needs can be life altering**. SBYSP staff provide consistent and trusting relationships, which students need in order to feel safe in our community. The continuity of care provided by SBYSP is hard to replicate in a larger community based program.

Students – are able to self-refer for any services, refer friends/peers. Free and confidential mental health services are available (as needed) throughout their time at HHS.

Faculty – immediate response to faculty concerns/observation on student behavior, emotionally charged response to assignment, etc.

Administration- collaborative approach to responding to student and family needs- quickly assess possible threats, student safety & wellbeing, handle with care situations, student academic performance, etc,

Harrison PD – immediate response to student crisis, etc.

### **Level of Service**

SBYSP operates on a 12 month calendar. Commissioner does not address the level of service that will be provided during the summer.

Summer Transition Program for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders – provides services to help incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to adjust to HHS. Teambuilding, social skills building, provide familiarity with staff and administration to help ease anxiety regarding transition to high school. **As of 10/5/22, 56% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students have enrolled in SBYSP program. They are all eligible to participate in any of our services.**

Ongoing counseling (individual, family, group) is offered as an option for students who receive services during the school year.

Crisis counseling is available for students in need, as SBYSP personnel are available.

**FY21-22 – 55% of students enrolled at HHS participate in services provided by SBYSP**

**FY20-21 – 52% of students enrolled at HHS participate in services provided by SBYSP**

### **Student Mentoring Program**

Fifty-three students (juniors/seniors) applied and selected as mentors. The mentors will receive ongoing training to mentor underclassmen. As of 10/5/22, all incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and transfer students have been assigned a mentor. Mentors will provide ongoing support, tutoring, and leadership to their mentees. A formal meet and greet will be held to facilitate the development of meaning relationships.

### **Community Outreach**

SBYSP is currently working with community organizations (Harrison Senior Citizen Center) to develop the “Senior 2 Senior” program. SBYSP mentors will interact with senior citizens, providing socialization and relationship building. The program will help facilitate a sense of community while also filling the generational gap with our students. The mentors will also

collaborate with the Student Government Association, National Honor Society, Environmental Club, and other school organizations in organizing community wide events.

### **Prevention Services**

Psychosocial workshops presented to students (at various grade levels through Health classes) Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Awareness, Building Healthy Relationships, Conflict Resolution, Self-Care, Time Management and Study Skills, etc.

Freshman Seminar Classes – collaborate with faculty to supplement social emotional learning curriculum

Financial Literacy Classes – Career Development and Exploration, Resume Building, etc.

### **On Going Support**

Transitional Program for ELL Spanish Speakers

Transitional Program for ELL Portuguese Speakers

Groups for coping with anxiety, social skills development, female relational aggression

Academic Support-individual tutoring, collaboration with faculty on academic support for individual students. SBYSP staff provide accommodations for ELL students who may benefit from alternate testing environments.

Lunchtime Recreation Program- facilitated during three lunch periods, three days per week- provides students an avenue to interact with staff in a non-threatening level. Approximately 90 students participate on a daily basis. This is significant, as majority of male students will then seek out SBYSP when in need. Familiarity with staff provides safety net for this interaction. Recreation services also provide students the opportunity to develop age appropriate social skills.

### **Student and Family Advocacy**

Assist students and families with immediate concrete services (food insecurity, health issues, sexual health concerns referrals to community partners, etc.).

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## New Jersey Association of School Psychologists

**Subject: Regional Mental Health Hubs;  
Internal School Services**

Thank you for your interest in soliciting comments on this vital issue of concern to so many students, their families, and the school and broader communities of our State.

I am Sol B. Heckelman, PhD, a Licensed Psychologist and School Psychologist, currently retired. I have spent over 30 years serving New Jersey's urban communities as a School Psychologist and Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education. These remarks represent the concerns and recommendations of the NJ Assn of School Psychologists (NJASP). We view the mental health and wellbeing of all our students as a core aspect of our mission.

We applaud the Governor's recognition that mental health is a very strong concern for so many students. It should be noted that while Covid seems to have brought this concern to the fore, it's been there all along, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. We are grateful for the support planned to address this ongoing need for students of all ages and backgrounds throughout New Jersey.

As Director of Pupil Personnel Services in the Long Branch Schools when the School-Based Youth Services programs were initiated, I applied for and received one of the 6 grants awarded that first year. I was especially impressed by the fact that a program for schools was funded not by the NJDOE but by another NJ Department. (I believe it was DOH at the time.) It was a marvelous instance of inter-departmental collaboration.

The proposed development of a hub system in the general community is also, from our perspective, a useful recognition of the value of coordinating services toward common goals within a community.

We do not know who the educators are who, it is said, participated in the advisory group which came up with the plan for regional hubs. Did they specifically agree with defunding SBYSPs? No educators with whom we've discussed this are in favor. We do have two substantial concerns with the proposed plans for implementation.

First, funding would apparently be based on the use of funds currently dedicated to the School-Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSP). This, of course, would decimate the support services which, for approximately 25 years, have been consistently made available for collaborative

services within schools. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is not an improvement: it's a dangerous playing with smoke-and-mirrors. We know that "mental health" per se is not the primary focus of the SBYSs but they clearly do provide value in that respect, as well as other related factors.

Here is one immediate reaction from a member of NJASP's Executive Board:

*There is a school-based program in my district (county vocational school); it's devastating that they will be gone come June, if not sooner: at least one clinician is already job-seeking. So many students rely on them to get thru their day-to-day functioning and connect them to community services. This community hub system will not help our students who don't have the support at home and can barely make it thru their school day. It feels like we've had more mental health crises in school this past month than other years. I don't know how we will function next year without them. I don't see my district picking up extra counselors on their own budget.*

This brings us to the other concern referred to above: efficient delivery of mental health services for students. We need to view students with mental health issues not thru the lens of the medical model, i.e., as carriers of a disease to be treated individually. These concerns need to be seen within the framework of a public health model. That is, within the context of the interrelated (school) community within which they live and function. Their health is in large part reflective of dynamic interactive relationships within the entire school community (and, of course, of other relationships outside the school).

As the Natl Assn of School Psychologists (NASP) points out:

*Of the adolescents who do get help, nearly two-thirds do so only in school.*

*"Schools are an ideal place to provide mental and behavioral health services to children and youth. Schools provide an ideal context for prevention, intervention, positive development, and regular communication between school and families. Schools also offer caring relationships and regular, consistent connections between students and staff both in person and virtually. School-employed mental health professionals (i.e., school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses) know the students, parents, and other staff, which contributes to accessibility of services. **Research shows that students are more likely to seek counseling when services are available in schools.** In some cases, such as rural areas, schools provide the only mental health services in the community. Comprehensive, culturally responsive school mental health services can help address inequities in access and help reduce the stigma associated with receiving mental health services by making it part of the fabric of the school system."*

*(emphasis added)*

"Comprehensive School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health Services and School Psychologists" (NASP, 2021)

A tremendous advantage for providers of these services is familiarity with the relationship dynamics within the schools of these students. So, specially trained school staff are the ideal sources of such services: school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists. I say this as a person who had worked as a clinical psychologist before becoming a school psychologist. My experience included clinics, psychiatric and general hospitals, as a civilian and the US Army, within the USA and in Japan.

Students are not in schools as patients, as they would be in a clinic or hospital. In the latter settings, therapists apply their skills in various locations, where the location itself may reflect the patient's status or needs rather than being a determinant of the patient's functioning. Within schools, in addition to their own individual personalities, students' wellbeing and functioning are very much influenced by teachers and other adult staff and peers with whom they interact daily for much of the day, by school climate, by the day's class structure and activities, and so on.

None of this should be seen as denigrating the skills of non-school therapists who specialize in the more intense disabling conditions such as suicidal concerns, severe depression, and so on. There is, of course, recognized need for such services. But to the extent that we focus on the vast majority of mental health issues which impede students' optimal functioning, trained school staff are in the best position to ameliorate

NJASP representatives are readily available for further discussion, should you find that useful.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Sol B. Heckelman, PhD  
NJASP

[REDACTED]

The school base program has changed my life in more ways than I can ever think of or thank the wonderful staff who have helped me become the person I am today. Without Maria Rebelo and her amazing staff at Harrison High School, I may have been just another Harrison statistic. We had endless and countless talks in their offices that helped me with a lot of tough and difficult situations that no child should have to deal with or go through. They provided me with the support that I needed to overcome everything that I had encountered in my life such as the loss of a dear friend and classmate while in high school, loss of numerous family members, etc. They let me know that I was in a safe space and their door was opened whenever I needed to talk about the experiences that I've encountered throughout my life and even situations that I struggled with daily.

If the SBYSP is eliminated, it will be a terrible loss for the students at HHS. This program provides them with the guidance that not every student receives from their families at home. The SBYSP is one of the best programs for students to be a part of not only because they care about the students in which they serve but they go above and beyond for them too. They provide the students with the resources and tools to be successful. Not every student at home has the "Leave It To Beaver Family" where they get to sit down with their parents and talk about their day, get homework help, and how they are feeling and adapting to life.

These children are our future, don't punish them by taking such a great resource away from them. I know it has helped me and a lot of others over the past 20 years. SBYSP is more than a program, it's an extended family especially to those who have minimal family and not many individuals in their lives that they can guide them or even look up to.

Thank you,  
Nicole

Nicole A. Brown, MHA  
Team Lead, Ambulatory Care  
David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
545 E. 74th Street , New York, NY 10021  
[brownn@mskcc.org](mailto:brownn@mskcc.org)

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68x

October 17, 2022

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to you today to lay witness to the impactful and meaningful work that Harrison's School Based Youth Program has done for decades. I've been out of High school for seventeen years now and the help I received from that program then still resonates with me now. As a child of immigrant parents, getting mental health care was unacceptable. As someone who has struggled with depression since the age of 13, the SBYSP's services were vital to my survival. That isn't the testimony I wish to discuss today, however. What I wish to do today is speak for a student who no longer can; School Based championed this student, cried with her, struggled with her, and made the last eighteen months of her life bearable.

This young woman was my dearest friend and, for all intents and purposes, my little sister. She was the daughter of very well-known parents in town, and that can both be a blessing and a curse. My friend's childhood was full of disappointment and emotional pain.

When she started high school, it didn't take too long for her to get on the SBYSP's radar. Though loveable and charming, she also had significant mood swings. Because of her father's notoriety in town, there were very few places where she had the space to freely share and seek guidance to navigate the trauma she had endured. SBYSP created probably the first real safe-space she ever had.

Just as things were looking up for her, she got cancer: the rare, no-one-has-ever-survived-it, kind. I'm not sure whether she was a senior in high school or had just recently graduated, but it did last two years, and the staff at SBYSP did not care that she was "aging out;" Once a Harrison High student, always a Harrison High student. They continued to see her. They continued to offer her a safe space to share her fears of dying and, selflessly, her fears for her father's health once she was gone. They helped her navigate the hardest thing we can ever EVER ask anyone to help a young person navigate- the realities of mortality and the inevitability that once more she had been dealt a bad hand. Before she could even begin to live her life she was losing it to a heartless disease. I remember being in rooms with them as we all cried together as this young woman withered away in front of us. They comforted her, they comforted me, and the folks at SBYSP never once turned away.

They helped us to celebrate her life before she needed to give it up. We all had an outing together that I will remember until the Lord so chooses to call me forward. This was not on school time, this was not during regular business hours, this was on a Friday night, where I'm sure they had family obligations or commitments of their own, but they made sure that we all celebrated her final birthday in the most grandiose of ways.

There were plenty of conversations I know I was not privy to. That is how therapy works of course, but I do know that she depended on SBYSP to help get her through. I know she called whenever she needed, and someone was made available to her. I know they never once turned their back or were too busy to help their student, and I also know that my friend was one of thousands they have helped in the same way.

Harrison is not the richest of towns. There are a lot of poor immigrant families whose kids have no other outlet for emotional support than the School Based Youth Program at their school. I know I'm a survivor because of them, and I know my friend survived those last two painful years without falling into complete helplessness because of this program.

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I believe this program makes a difference. It is the only lifeline for so many students. Now is not the time to turn your backs on Teenagers' mental health. They have just come out on the other side of what has been and probably will be the worst health crisis of our lifetimes. The adjustment to a (semi) post-COVID world is a struggle for us all. I cannot even begin to imagine what it is like for High School students today. Almost three years of their formative lives were put on pause overnight. To expect them to reintegrate and establish a sense of normalcy without the mental health support that the SBYP provides is, respectfully, irresponsible. Dissolving this program- even *considering* dissolving this program, is a mistake you will spend years trying to fix and, in the meantime, you will ruin students' lives, or worse: lose them.

Sincerely,



Armanda Cerqueira  
Academic Advisor for RBS-Newark  
Harrison High School Alum

70x

Nicholas J. Landy  
401 Kingsland Ave  
Harrison NJ 07029  
[nicholas.landy@staff.harrisonschools.org](mailto:nicholas.landy@staff.harrisonschools.org)

To Whom It May Concern.

The purpose of this letter is to extol the virtues and importance of the SBYS School Based Youth Services program here at Harrison High school. Since the 2000 school year I have had the pleasure of working closely with these professionals and have seen first hand how much of a positive impact it has made on our students and their families, while also helping our teachers and staff. Whether its their weekly recreation program, class trips, college visits, financial aid assistance or several retreats which impacts a large number of students and essentially helps the school culture and climate. There are also many counseling services that on most days need an immediate response that would be very difficult if a student would need to go outside for these services.

Throughout the past 20 plus years this group has made such a lasting impact not because of having the program but how the program is done. This program is tailored to our particular population and because of how well those who run and work in the program are connected to our community it lends to their success. The director of our program is a product of the Harrison school system and who better to know what this community needs. All of the people that work in the program have acclimated themselves very well to our school community. When you add to that the support they give our staff and students it is a perfect recipe for success.

In conclusion, while I understand the current thinking of creating a new plan to help more schools throughout the state I fear that if we are not allowed to continue "In House" the negative impact on my beloved school community is frightening. Please reconsider these actions to end this program

Respectfully Yours

Nicholas J Landy  
HHS  
teacher/coach

71x

To whom it may concern,

Im writing this letter to you to let you know about my wonderful experience on the School Based Youth Program. I was a Sophomore in Harrison High School and needed counseling to understand my parent's divorce which was based on a lot of drama. Mrs Revelo and Mr. V kindly helped me giving me support in every step of the way. They used a lot of their valuable time to listen to me and also talk and listen to my parents. I found myself very confused and I couldn't focus on my school as before. I thank this wonderful program for being there for me and my family to prevent any further issues, along with stress and God for bid what other things might have happened. The times we spent talking helped me feel that I wasn't alone and I could rely on such angels like Mrs Rebelo and Ms V. They both were like family to me that opened up their hearts every time I needed them. I would never forget that they even helped me to raise money for my Prom so that I can have a chance to buy my dress and attend to the beautiful event. Mrs Rebelo gave me the money she helped me raise with tears in her eyes, that showed me how much they really cared. Even two decades after we met we are still in contact and are catching up with everything that's happening in my life now as a mom.

I hope you can take this as a consideration and help keep this program that is very important to the youth especially on this hard times we are now living. The juveniles need counseling and need to be heard because they deal with many different issues in life. Listening to them and giving them advice is what's going to keep our world safer because we need to keep them safe and happy. This is how we can prevent many negative situations, keep them controlled and loved!

Sincerely,  
Maria Leon

72x

To Whom It May Concern:

Finding out that I was pregnant at the age of fourteen was very scary. Even though I was only fourteen years old, I knew that abortion was not an option for me. My parents did not take the news very well and my mom told me I had to move out of their house. I did not have anywhere to go or any money. My son's grandmother took me in and helped me through the pregnancy. My parents eventually helped me by taking me to doctor's appointments and helping us with everything they could. I was able to get a job at a fast-food restaurant at fifteen, soon after giving birth to my son. We were able to rent our own apartment and purchase a car. We were doing well at such a young age.

I continued to attend high school even though dropping out did cross my mind. Even though life at home was going well, I was very depressed. I suffered from post-partum depression, but it was never treated because I did not have health insurance and could not afford to go to the doctor. I was very depressed and knew that I was missing out so much like having friends, prom, the high school experience. I knew that my decision to keep my son and live a grown-up life at such a young age was affecting me. Mrs. Maria Rebelo called me in and introduced herself and told me how she could help me. I immediately started meeting with her, I went to see her almost daily.

Going to see Mrs. Rebelo was such a help for me because I could talk to her about everything I was going through and she would listen to me and give me advice. I knew she was not judging me and actually cared about me. She constantly checked on me and made sure I was doing ok even when I missed school. Having her there was such a relief for me since I really did not have many friends, and no one understood how I was feeling and what I was going through. I truly believe that I made it and graduated high school because she was there for me. I graduated from Harrison High School, June 2008 with honors.

After graduation, I attended Marine Corps bootcamp. I decided to join the Marine Corps because I wanted to leave New Jersey. I did not want my son to grow up where I grew up. I wanted him to have a better chance than I did. I moved to South Carolina in 2009 to my first duty station. I am now a Gunnery Sergeant in the Marine Corps and have been active duty for fourteen years now. I do plan on continuing my career and retiring at twenty years of service.

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73x

13 October 2022

During my time in the Marine Corps, I have moved to several states, have traveled the world, earned my Bachelor's and Master's degrees completely free. The best part is that my son is seventeen years old now and is not a teen parent but is actually enrolled in the Onslow Early College High School. He attends Community College full time and will graduate with a High School diploma and an Associate's degree in May 2023. He is currently applying to four-year colleges and wants to pursue medicine.

I live in a beautiful house by the beach in North Carolina and I have a pretty successful life. I am expecting my fourth child and could not ask for anything else. I know that my success in the Marine Corps and in life is thanks to Mrs. Rebelo. Her support, dedication, and encouragement helped me get through difficult years and helped me get through my depression. This program was crucial for me and I know is crucial for so many kids who need someone to talk to outside of home. Harrison High School did not give up on me, Mrs. Rebelo did not give up on me. Since I no longer live in New Jersey, I keep up with Mrs. Rebelo electronically. In 2018, I went to New Jersey to visit family and I had to stop by the High School and visit her. She still has my bootcamp graduation picture on her board which made it clearer to me that she always cared about me and still cares about me.

I believe this program should stay available to all kids because it really does make a difference. It made a difference for me and I know it has helped hundreds and hundreds of students. Please keep this program available to our kids, they are the future of this nation and we want what is best for them. We all need someone to talk to and a lot of these kids do not have anyone to talk to at home. This program can give all those kids, like me, a place to vent, talk, cry, and have a friend. With the mental health crisis, having this program available to young students is crucial. I am so grateful this program was available to me and Mrs. Rebelo and the entire team were there for me. I can never thank them enough for believing in me and supporting me every step of the way. I truly believe I would not be where I am today without their support.

If you have any questions, please give me a call at \_\_\_\_\_ or email me at \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

*Maria Starr*

Maria (Sarmiento) Starr

74x

Do not take SBYSP out of the schools. This proposed expansion is an elimination of the existing SBYSP model and will not provide the necessary mental health services inside our schools! I urge you to keep SBYSP in place and build off that. These programs are essential to the families and communities they have served for over 35 years.

School Based is my safe place. Here is where I consider my home, where I can speak my mind and not get judged! Since I came to high school, they have been nothing but helpful, supportive and many more amazing things. They saved my life. If it wasn't for them I don't think I'd be alive today, breathing, living, being happy. Since I was in the 2nd grade, I've struggled with my mental health and they made me realize it's okay to have feelings. It's okay to not be okay. They made me the person I am today. They are the reason my family has me today. If School Based was taken away from me, it's like taking away the people I need the most here with me, the people that are the most valuable to me. They are people I can talk to when I have no one else. They are my voice, they are there for me when I'm at my lowest I have ever been. These people are amazing people who would do anything in their power to make you feel the best you've ever been, and they won't give up on you, no matter the cost, they won't give up on you, like other people would!!

Current 10th grader  
SBYSP Harrison High School

### 3 of my many achievements with School Based Youth Services Program

How did the School Based Youth Services Program help me and my family? School Based Youth program was my escape from reality, when things weren't going good at home or outside or even around school i knew i could always count on My counselors. In high school as a teen we go through many changes in life we begin to discover the outside world as well as our freedom not always making the right decisions, school based was one program that always gave me something to do Just so i was making the right decisions and not hanging around the wrong crowds. School based not only helped me but as well as my family because at home we were a family of 7 and we never really came together as one, school based not only brought me but my family on many trips as well bringing us all together to make memories and learn to cherish one another. School based pretty much brought my blended family together. Many times things would get hard at home my parents grew the confidence to call my counselors to bring us all in and try to come to a better way of handling situations. In high school i lost my mom as well as brother i was also a new student in Harrison High school coming from Bronx NY. Being apart of school base built my confidence, before coming to Harrison high school i was in a very dark lonely place and coming together with school base as well as other students showed me i wasn't alone .. i remember having a grieving group where many of us had lost loved ones and we would come together to figure out ways to cope with grief. Although I'm going quit a few years out of high school, school based youth program has showed me that they are just a phone call away & they are there.

BD

Class of 2016 at Harrison High School

Rose Bimbi

Wantage, NJ 07461

13 October, 2022

To whom it may concern,

Hello, my name is Rose Bimbi, I am a 2019 graduate of the Sussex County Technical School in Sparta, New Jersey. I utilized many of the school resources that were implemented in the school, such as the student center and the counseling services, frequently. The student center offers a variety of resources to students and families that are a part of the school; these include but are not limited to Sunstation, a summer program to prepare the incoming freshmen for the school year and to allow them to meet some of their peers as well as some of the staff members; counseling services; school events to promote student interactions; the student center; and many other resources that are crucial to making the school a comfortable and welcoming community.

As a student, I utilized all of the resources listed in the previous paragraph. As an incoming freshman, Sunstation helped me transition into high school more comfortably; I was able to meet some students and have a familiar face to look for on the first day of school. They conducted teambuilding activities and I was also able to meet the staff at the student center, as well as some teachers, during the summer which allowed me to have an established support group in the school that I could go to that I was already familiar with.

I also took advantage of the counseling services while attending the school; I began my junior year and continued until I was a senior. These services were so beneficial to me and many of the other students; here in Sussex County, a very rural area, organizations, and programs are not very accessible without transportation. Therefore, with the lack of public transportation and relying on guardians/parents for transportation, obtaining counseling services outside of school is

77x

limited. On top of the deficiency of public transportation, many of the counseling services available outside of the school do not have any available sessions; with the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health, more individuals are investing time in their mental health care. With the shortage of available mental healthcare professionals, the counseling services offered by the student center guarantee the students counseling services that may be unobtainable otherwise.

The student center also administers a variety of events that promote togetherness in the school creating a comfortable environment and making the school experience more enjoyable and impactful for the students. These events range from having movie events on a Friday afternoon and having video game tournaments, to conducting an afternoon dedicated to carving/painting pumpkins or gingerbread house making, to hosting informative presentations that educate the students on topics such as teen dating violence, sexual assault awareness, and teen pregnancy. The student center is a place where students can go to do a variety of things. Some students do not have access to the internet at home, the student center is an area where they can comfortably do their homework and study with access to a variety of resources. Some students do not have ideal at-home situations, the student center is somewhere they can go and feel comfortable, it may be the only place they can truly relax and feel comfortable. Along with that, the student center is an area where students can connect with one another under the excellent supervision of the student center staff. At a technical school with students from towns all over the county being able to see your friends outside of school can be very difficult, in a rural area. Once again there is a lack of public transportation in Sussex County and the students rely on their parents/guardians to get where they need/want to be. Interacting with friends is crucial for development, if a student lives in Hopatcong and becomes friends with a student in

78x

Montague the drive to get from one town to the other is easily 50 minutes. Some parents are not willing to drive 50 minutes for their children to hang out with a friend or have other responsibilities such as jobs, other children, etc. Personally, I had multiple friends that lived in Andover, which is a 35-minute drive from my house, as a high schooler without a license I would have to ask my mom to drive me to see my friends or vice-versa. However, I am not an only child and neither were my friends so it was not always possible to hang out due to the fact that our parents had other children to take care of. The student center eliminated this trouble, we were able to see each other outside of class and connect with one another under the supervision of the student center staff which kept us in a safe environment.

To conclude the student center is a necessary program in the school system. I graduated in 2019, as previously stated, when I found out the student center was being shut down I reached out to the coordinator of the student center, Mrs. Sarnier, and even though I graduated four years ago she still remembered me and recognized my voice. The student center is more than just a place for students to hang out and play games, it is a safe place where students can go. It has made a tremendous impact on my life, I graduated from the technical school with my Cosmetology License, however, the student center played a huge impact in my decision to continue my education to go on and major in social work. Please take into consideration everything I have stated in this letter and realize how much you are going to be taking away from these students.

Sincerely,

Rose Bimbi

*BSW Student of Ramapo College of New Jersey*

79x




Sussex County Vocational Technical Education Association  
105 N. Church Road  
Sparta NJ, 07871  
973-383-6700


Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer  
PO Box 500  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
October 11th, 2022

Dear Commissioner Norbut Beyer,


We are saddened to hear of the loss of grants for the School Based Youth Services Program. Our branch of the SBYS program at Sussex County Technical School, affectionately known at our school as "The Student Center" is an integral part of our school community. First and foremost, they provide therapy, counseling, and mental health services to our students which are necessary on a regular basis. Being a rural county, it can often be hard for students to access mental health and other services due to the lack of public transportation and physical distance to do so. These services can be provided during or after school when students are already on campus. They also provide after-school activities that provide many of our students with a safe place to go. The Student Center also provides Professional Development to the staff of Sussex Tech on a variety of topics including mental health, LGBTQI issues, suicide awareness and prevention, and self-care. We beseech you to reconsider this cut in funding and restore it at the full 2021-2022 levels and ensure its safety for the foreseeable future.

Sincerely,

  
Craig Harlacher, President

  
Dennis McCarthy, Vice-President

  
Michael LaCorte, Secretary

  
Erin Shawiak, Vice-President

  
Mindy Schlereth, Treasurer

Cc:  
Student Center, Sussex County Technical School  
Augustus Modla, Superintendent, Sussex County Technical School

80x

October 5, 2022

Dear Commissioner Norbut Beyers,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a student at Sussex County Technical High School in Sparta. I have learned that you and Governor Murphy are seeking to dismantle our amazing Student Center, known to you as a School Based Youth Services Program.

I cannot express how sad this makes me as I know many of my friends use the Student Center to get help and support for all kinds of things. Sometimes they are really stressed and they can drop in to talk to anyone there because it is easy to access and we all know the Student Center cares. Most of the students here wouldn't be able to find support like this outside of school and I'm concerned that these classmates will not be able to find the immediate help that the Student Center can offer.

Did you know that they have a therapy dog? That I can get free food for my family that I can take home on my bus? That they work together with an Optical Clinic and a Dental Clinic so we can make sure we are healthy? Did you know they have an on-site psychiatric nurse that helps students get additional intensive support when therapy isn't quite enough? I can get free snacks that help me stay focussed during the school day. No program that is being added can do any of these things.

A lot of my friends drop in after school for recreation too. There is always something fun planned or we can just hang out and decompress after school with our friends because we live all over Sussex County. There's no public transportation to take us to a friend's house. I know it is a safe place to go and they are really nice people there.

We are also lucky that they offer a Gay, Straight Alliance that gives students a place to find community and to be an ally. They also offer a therapy group to support kids here that identify or are questioning whether they fall into the LGBTQ+ spectrum. I can't find that in my community. If we can't address the underlying issues that contribute to our mental health concerns, therapy is an option but it doesn't stop the problem from occurring and affecting our lives. The Student Center simply "gets us" and they take the time to know us and our community intimately and know to support us right at the source.

I hope you reconsider shutting the doors on these programs. They are literally a lifeline for so many kids here. The Student Center is simply a few steps away from anywhere on campus and they give us so much and do so much to keep kids safe, healthy and successful. Please, please, please, do NOT take our program away!

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81x

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We are also lucky that they offer a Gay, Straight Alliance that gives students a place to find community and to be an ally. They also offer a therapy group to support kids here that identify or are questioning whether they fall into the LGBTQ+ spectrum. I can't find that in my community. If we can't address the underlying issues that contribute to our mental health concerns, therapy is an option but it doesn't stop the problem from occurring and affecting our lives. The Student Center simply "gets us" and they take the time to know us and our community intimately and know to support us right at the source.

I hope you reconsider shutting the doors on these programs. They are literally a lifeline for so many kids here. The Student Center is simply a few steps away from anywhere on campus and they give us so much and do so much to keep kids safe, healthy and successful. Please, please, please, do NOT take our program away!

Sincerely,

90x

October 5, 2022

Dear Commissioner Norbut Beyers,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a student at Sussex County Technical High School in Sparta. I have learned that you and Governor Murphy are seeking to dismantle our amazing Student Center, known to you as a School Based Youth Services Program.

I cannot express how sad this makes me as I know many of my friends use the Student Center to get help and support for all kinds of things. Sometimes they are really stressed and they can drop in to talk to anyone there because it is easy to access and we all know the Student Center cares. Most of the students here wouldn't be able to find support like this outside of school and I'm concerned that these classmates will not be able to find the immediate help that the Student Center can offer.

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Dear Senator Oroho, Assemblyman Wirths, and Assemblyman Space,

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ d I am a student at Sussex County Technical High School. I have learned that Governor Murphy is seeking to dismantle our amazing Student Center, perhaps known to you as a School Based Youth Services Program.

I cannot express how sad and angry this makes me as I know many of my friends use the Student Center to get help and support for all kinds of things. Sometimes they are really stressed and they can drop in to talk to anyone there because it is easy to access and we all know the Student Center cares. Most of the students here wouldn't be able to find support like this outside of school and I'm concerned that these classmates will not be able to find the immediate help that the Student Center can offer. Who do we go to when our friend is suicidal or wants to hurt themselves?

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We come from all kinds of backgrounds here. If we can't address the underlying issues that contribute to our mental health concerns, therapy is an option but it doesn't stop the problem from occurring and affecting our lives. The new system only seems to address helping students after they have an issue. It will be difficult to be "preventive" if staff aren't on site daily, seeing and understanding our lives and circumstances. The Student Center simply "gets us" and they take the time to know us and our community intimately and know to support us right at the source.

I hope you reconsider shutting the doors on these programs. They are literally a lifeline for so many kids here and around New Jersey. The Student Center is simply a few steps away from anywhere on campus and they give us so much and do so much to keep kids safe, healthy and successful. Please, please, please, do NOT take our program away!

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10/18/2022

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Dr. Matthew Cuellar and I am a Professor of Social Work at University of Alaska Anchorage. I formerly worked at Montclair State University, where I had the honor and privilege of collaborating with the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP). **I am writing this letter to oppose NJ4S and to advocate for state-wide expansion of current SBYSP services in New Jersey schools.**

From 2020 – 2021, I collaborated with SBYSP to help them identify a program-wide process for enabling school-based practitioners to engage in evidence-based practice. Working with SBYSP, we conducted a formative needs assessment of the program and found that one of the greatest strengths of their work with youth and families is that they rely heavily on the utilization of empirically-supported interventions and practices (what are often referred to as “evidence-based practices”).

While empirically-supported interventions are common practice for all SBYSP programs (as their formal evaluations have demonstrated), my work involved helping SBYSP take this a step further by developing a resource database and user interface for practitioners to easily access evidence-based resources, as well as tools that allow them to effectively consume the evidence they are reviewing. This resulted in the development of a first-of-its-kind resource dashboard with which a staff with no knowledge of research whatsoever could enter relevant client information, identify relevant evidence-based practices, critique the evidence’s rigor, and apply the evidence in their work with youth and families. This is a truly innovative practice model that allows practitioners to use evidence to inform their daily practice, regardless of their training or expertise, thus engaging in evidence-based practice as a process.

In my role as collaborator, I will never forget the collegiality and conducive nature of the environment the staff fostered in SBYSP. It is an environment in which evidence-based practice occurs naturally and is not forced; many programs spend years trying to create an environment like this to no avail. This type of environment is ideal because it leads to staff retention and desirable implicit and explicit outcomes for the youth and families they serve. I often reference the SBYSP as an ideal model for school-based program development when working with programs that ask me to help them develop a practice model for incorporating evidence-based practice in their daily operations.

I have taught evidence-based practice methods in higher education for nearly ten years, and have conducted research on the use of evidence to inform school-based practice the entire length of my research career. Moreover, I have done process and outcome program evaluations in this capacity for countless programs, and reflect on my work with SBYSP with consideration of this expertise. In reflecting on my professional and personal experiences as a scholar and a father of school-age children, I can confidently say that this program is one of the few I have worked with that truly adheres to an evidence-based practice framework, and serves for the sole purpose of improving the lives of youth, families, and communities. For these reasons, I hope you will join me in opposition of NJ4S, and I call on all involved with this determination to advocate for the expansion of SBYSP across all New Jersey schools. Children enrolled in the 91 schools SBYSP serves are the future of New Jersey. Therefore, a vote against NJ4S is a vote for New Jersey’s future.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Cuellar, PhD, MSW

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To: Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Public Schools

From: Megann Anderson Fischer, Executive Director

Re: New Jersey Statewide Student Support Service (NJ4S) Network

Date: October 19, 2022

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On behalf of the New Jersey Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families (NJACYF) and our members, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the New Jersey Statewide Student Support Service (NJ4S) Network concept proposed by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF).

We commend both DCF and the Legislature for the efforts being undertaken to examine current services in order to ensure equity and access to youth in need of mental health services, including a review of the current School Based Youth Services Program. The NJACYF supports the expansion of all prevention services to reach all of the student in New Jersey and to maximize federal funding streams in a way that will ensure continuity of supports. The sustainability of the existing network of services, however, will be vital to the success of the proposed NJ4S Network.

For example, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the proposed NJ4S Network rely on linkages to existing programming and/or community resources. Many of these existing programs and community resources are provided by the NJACYF's member organizations including: community-based services, in-home services, out-of-home residential services, mobile crisis response, care management, and family support. These programs are struggling with a myriad of challenges that include difficulty attracting and retaining staff resulting in significant staffing shortages, inadequate rates despite the recent rate rebalancing, delays in background checks and licensing, and increased costs for insurance, energy and other costs of operating organization.

The potential staff for the NJ4S network will likely come directly from NJACYF members and/or from the pool of potential candidates available in our field. We would respectfully request that current programs be financially supported through the allocation of American Rescue Plan dollars in the short term, rate rebalancing in State Fiscal Year 2024, and annual cost of living adjustments in the long-term, in order to ensure that services are available to youth identified through the NJ4S network and referred to community-based, out-of-home or

other services and supports when they are need. Without this investment, an already strained and, in some instances, failing youth mental health system will become even more stressed and will completely collapse.

Today marks the one-year anniversary of a declared youth mental health emergency by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children's Hospital Association. Those groups declared this emergency noting that children's mental health concerns and suicide rose steadily between 2010 and 2020 and by 2018 suicide was the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. The pandemic further exacerbated this crisis, and since 2020, there have been dramatic increases in emergency visits for all youth mental health emergencies including suspected suicide attempts.

We must ensure that the State is taking the necessary steps to empower schools to not only enrich the academic growth of their students, but also to provide the skills and supports necessary to foster resiliency, social development and emotional maturity and to achieve success and live happy, fulfilling lives. The NJACYF providers are at the forefront of this effort, and we look forward to continuing our work with DCF, supported by the Legislature, to identify and care for children, youth and families in New Jersey.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the NJ4S Network proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or should you require additional information from the NJACYF.

To whom it may concern:

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), a federation of all of the state's local boards of education, appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) proposal to establish the NJ Statewide Student Support Service (NJ4S) Network. According to an Executive Summary of the proposal, the NJ4S is a student mental health initiative that "will modernize and expand New Jersey's School Linked Services to increase its reach beyond the 2% of New Jersey students that are currently engaged, while ensuring continuity of support."

The goal of the NJ4S is certainly a laudable one. To be clear, the NJSBA strongly supports efforts to enhance and expand mental health services for students, particularly as they recover from the trauma they have experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Association has long advocated for increased state and federal support for mental health initiatives. We greatly appreciate that the Murphy Administration is heeding that call through the NJ4S proposal by pledging an additional \$8.5 million in federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars to support the startup of the program, on top of the \$6.5 million in ARP funds already allocated through the FY2023 state budget. The NJSBA applauds the intent of NJ4S and is hopeful that it will enable more of the state's 1.4 million students to receive critically important supports.

Unfortunately, the NJ4S proposal also calls for the transition away from the School Linked Services portfolio including the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP), in its current form, and replacing it with the NJ4S at the end of the current school year. While we appreciate the ambitious timeframe, and recognize its necessity to implement a full transition from the SLS model to the NJ4S model, it has raised concerns regarding the difficulty of ensuring continuity of services at their current scope. The SBYSP provides students – in a school setting – with critically important supports, such as mental health counseling, employment counseling, substance abuse education and prevention, preventive health awareness, primary medical linkages, and learning support. Dozens of our member districts participate in the program and find it to be an incredibly valuable resource that has achieved positive results for thousands of students and parents across New Jersey. When the program was threatened with elimination two years ago, the NJSBA argued, along with many other education groups, advocates, and state lawmakers, that the SBYSP should not only be maintained, but also strengthened and expanded. Thankfully, the SBYSP was preserved and continues providing students with the supports they need to this very day.

NJSBA shares the concerns of many of our member districts throughout the state over how NJ4S will affect the delivery of mental health supports and other services to students currently

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receiving services under the existing SBYSP, particularly as we already face a serious shortage of mental health professionals. Should the state proceed with the implementation of NJ4S, continuity of and access to the services many students have come to rely on must remain a priority. While we are encouraged by the Governor's commitment to student mental health – and the DCF's commitment that “students currently receiving services will continue to be supported” – it is imperative that the transition to NJ4S include additional steps to ensure that students and schools experience minimal disruption.

The anxiety that schools currently participating in the SBYSP have been feeling since the NJ4S initiative was announced is significant. To alleviate their concerns and ensure that students and parents continue to receive the level of services they have come to rely on through the SBYSP, the NJSBA believes that the program must remain in place in its current form for the foreseeable future. Until we can guarantee that students will receive the same level of support through the NJ4S that they receive under the SBYSP, we are concerned that phasing out programs in their current form without having the evidence and experience to demonstrate that the NJ4S model is working as intended could adversely affect student mental health supports and other important services. Furthermore, we believe that a longer implementation timeframe, preservation of the SBYSP, and more robust collaboration with all stakeholders will provide this proposal the time and support it needs to have the greatest chance of success.

For the reasons set forth herein, we respectfully, but strongly, encourage the state to maintain the existing School Based Youth Services Program while moving forward with implementation of the new NJ4S initiative. Even if, given the realities of limited resources, an overlap of SBYSP and NJ4S necessitates gradually phasing-in the NJ4S “Hubs” over time, we believe that this approach strikes the appropriate balance between providing continuity of supports for currently-served students and ensuring a seamless transition to the NJ4S model.

Thank you for your consideration of our feedback on this critical matter. The NJSBA stands ready to work with the Murphy Administration on this and any other initiatives that promote the mental health and achievement of all of the state's 1.4 million students.

Sincerely,

*Jonathan Pushman*

*Director of Governmental Relations*

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*New Jersey School Boards Association*

*Office: (609) 278-5248*

*Cell: (609) 529-5154*

*Email: [jpushman@njsba.org](mailto:jpushman@njsba.org)*

## SBYS Letter

*I am writing today on behalf of the Garden State Coalition of Schools (GSCS), a non-partisan organization of about 100 districts statewide. We have serious concerns about the Governor's proposal to create a new, regionalized student mental health initiative, the New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S) Network, within the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The projected launch for NJ4S is the 2023-2024 school year.*

*GSCS has a long history of supporting expansion of mental health services for students. As districts continue to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, those services have never been more important. We are very supportive of any expansion of existing mental health services for students, but believe that to be truly successfully for all of New Jersey's students, the NJ4S initiative requires additional time and thought.*

*We are especially concerned about the way in which NJ4S will affect vital continuity of care for students currently receiving services under the existing School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP). SBYSP currently serves thousands of students in over 90 districts statewide, and provides an array of preventive health, mental health and other support services. It is no exaggeration to say that these services function as a lifeline for many of those students, and should not be subjected to an abrupt cut-off in June 2023. This is especially true because we also believe that ensuring the success of the services described in NJ4S must, by necessity, require a significantly longer timeframe than that mapped out by DCF.*

*The longer timeframe will also help ensure that the regional mental health hubs are adequately staffed. Given the shortage of mental health professionals, this a real concern. Even if the hubs are operated on a contract basis, with private providers responsible for staffing and administration, the shortages will affect the levels of care available to students. Continuing the SBYSP while developing the NJ4S initiative over a longer period of time is a better way of matching the aims of the initiative with the realities of the current mental health staffing landscape.*

*We agree that our students need all the mental health support that the state can muster and appreciate the administration's commitment to that support. Combining a continuing commitment to SBYSP and extending the timeframe for implementation of NJ4S is the best way to support our students now and in the future.*

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

They're the support that you get when no one else is there. A year ago I tried to commit suicide and I was in a bad place. Pathways helped me express my feelings more and brain healthy ways to deal with my depression. Also for my junior prom, they paid for my ticket because I didn't have the money to buy it. They also helped me financially by giving me a \$100 Gift card to Shoprite to buy food for my family. Pathways is not just a place to heal but it's also a place that you can rely on and trust. Please, I'm begging you, do not take away Pathways from our school. I want teens to get the same help I did.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

When I was struggling with my mental health, I felt like I couldn't reach out to anyone first but Pathways helped me in the way they checked up on me and made me feel welcome. There was always someone to talk to there and I never felt forgotten and alone with any of the counselors. I remember when the 1 year date of my cousin's death had me depressed and incoherent in most of my classes throughout the day, I was walking down the hallways avoiding returning back to my class when two counselors stopped me and helped return back to reality they told me I didn't have to trail around mindless when I was sad and that I could come to sit with them to talk or relax my mind. I don't think I'll ever be able to thank them enough or express how grateful I am for being there for me, when my parents weren't. They've never judged, pressured, or made me talk when I didn't want to. I feel so comfortable in the space they've created because of how available and easy access it was in the school. I hope all students to come in this school will have the chance to reach out to them for help.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 12th

121X

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

Pathways has always been a safe place where we can go to at anytime and get support all throughout highschool. My senior year of highschool started of pretty dull, I didn't have friends, easy classes, or anything interesting to do throughout the day. It wasn't until I joined pathways that I made new friends gained a support system and a safe place that I can go to whenever I need to. Pathways isn't just a home but the people in it are like family. They've helped me through school, they've always been there for me, but most importantly they've made my highschool years a lot less lonely. I don't know what my life would be like without pathways and I hope that this program can continue to help people like me for many years. I love my pathways family!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

12<sup>th</sup>

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

there are kids, teenagers, and young adults, like me who need to know and be reminded that they aren't alone. As middle school and high school students start to grow up, they also tend to go through many traumatizing and life changing/threatening things. When people go through things, they can tend to feel alone, like me. But pathways makes sure you always have someone to talk to so you don't have to feel that way. But if pathways goes away what will we have? Who will we have to talk to when we aren't okay? These professionals put so much impact on these kids lives. I can't do it alone and neither can any of these other students. They are the reason we aren't alone and suffering.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 9

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

Pathways has saved me many times from making decisions, that could change my life forever. When I didn't have anyone I went to pathways, and there clinicians were always there with open arms. Without them I don't think I could have made it as far as I have. There are many more things that pathways has helped me with and done for me, but there are so many more that they could do for others, we need pathways.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 10.

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

Pathways is an incredible program for not only myself but to many other students. It provides easy access to mental, emotional support for students and it is a community that has bonded so much to the staff. The students feel safe in this environment; a safe place for everyone to have fun with games without the intense scrutiny from the cafeteria. Pathways is very important because it is convenient ~~and~~ to those who need the help and it is overall just an amazing program with amazing staff and amazing club opportunities. Pathways is such a huge part in Carteret High school for not just mental health education, but for creating bonds, anxiety relief and a reliable safe place for everyone.

Name: 

Grade: 12<sup>th</sup>

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

It's a safe place for people who don't really have a place in the school. Pathways is not just a place to hangout, it's a place where people can confide in and feel safe to talk about their problems. Pathways also has great opportunities for community service and get more involved with the school. Having this program is just benefits for the students and everything we do is always for the students and the community. So please let us keep it. This place has made our lives so much better whether is in or out of school.

Name: 

Grade: 12<sup>th</sup>

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

I did not know what pathways was until my freshman year. I found it to be a very comfortable safe space. I only came for my lunch but whenever I needed someone to talk to there was always someone available to talk to ~~me~~. I am now a Senior, and pathways actually impacted my life. I made bonds with the staff and they would push me to be the better me I can be. The GSA club taught me to be comfortable being bisexual. PALS let me get more out there I get to do community service and help a lot of people out, something I plan to do more of in the future. Words really can't ~~just~~ explain how much I love and appreciate pathways.

Name: 

Grade: 12<sup>th</sup>

127x

SAVE SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM / PATHWAYS CARTERET HIGH

We need Pathways SBYSP in our school because:

they personally helped me with my anger, whenever I come to pathways, everyone greets me and I feel welcome and accepted, I have been associated with pathways since the 8 grade, during that time, I would get upset very quickly, and had alot of outburst, now, pathways has helped me and taught me to control my anger, and it works, also with pathways we go on trips that take your mind away from things, and be able to learn responsibilities at the same time, pathways has really helped me and they do a great job at it

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 10

128x