

A RURAL UTAH STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT: AN INSIDER'S VIEW TO THE PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSOCIATED EFFECTS ON STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND FAMILIES

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Student Mental Health (SMH) Needs — WHY WE DID THIS:

1. There was no district SMH policy.
2. There were no counseling services for elementary students.
3. There was no organized student mental health program in the district.
4. A portion of the district student population was experiencing: post traumatic stress; ADHD; eating disorders; disrupted attachment (divorce, etc.); depression; bipolar disorder; Asperger Syndrome; anxiety; substance abuse and suicide.
5. Need for good mental health for all students.

Cache County School District (CCSD):

1. Demographics: 16,000 students, 16 (grades K-5) schools, 4 (6-7), 2 (8-9), 2 (comprehensive 10-12) high schools, 1 (continuation 10-12) high school
2. Located 90 miles north of Salt Lake covering approx. 2,000 square miles.

Cache County School District.
CCSD Student Mental Health Policy online at:
<http://www.ccsdut.org/policies.cfm?pid=892&searchwords=>

Tier 3 (Few Students)

Chronic/intense behavior problems, BRMH therapists' services in the schools, SAT interventions, parent meetings, PLCs, detailed behavior plans,...

Tier 2 (Some Students)

Social emotional needs are barriers to learning: SAT interventions, behavior plans, parent conferences, counseling, BRMH therapist consultations, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), parent meetings...

Tier 1 (All Students)

Positive Behavior Supports, anti-bullying activities/instruction, conflict mediation, positive Principal involvement, school activities, academic support and praise, academic-social-emotional skill building, after school programs, citizenship awards, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), positive notes and calls home, "Reading Nights" at school...

Bear River Mental Health (BRMH):

1. Therapist consults at Tier 2 w/ SAT.
2. Free therapy at school - Tier 3.
3. Regular collaboration meetings between CCSD and BRMH.
4. Training by BRMH staff for school site representatives.
5. BRMH staff attends mental health conferences with CCSD staff.

Additional Departmental/Agency Support of SMH Program: Seamless integration with CCSD Special Education Department. Other Collaborators: Bear River Health Department, Utah State University, Child and Family Support Center, Cache County Sheriff's Office, Juvenile Justice and Probation, various family and individual assault prevention agencies, and the Howard Center (Vermont)...

THE PROCESS: 1st Step: Formed a district SMH Steering Committee (counselors, psychologist, elementary and secondary admin., Spec. Ed. Director, teacher, parent, district rep), 2nd: Interviewed every Principal and a faculty rep re: SMH needs at their school (*key* to program success; strongly recommend doing this, if at all possible), 3rd: Created data-driven SMH district policy (ours required 17 revisions), 4th: Principals selected an SMH rep. for his/her school, 5th: Schools created SMH plan tied to district plan, 6th: Formed Student Assistant Team (SAT) at each school, 7th: Created SAT Referral Form for teachers (another *key* step), 8th: Developed partnerships with community agencies for student mental health, 9th: General SMH services description brochure to every district family in English and Spanish, 10th: Specific brochures for every district teacher, counselor, psychologist, principal... regarding nine SMH disorders and classroom strategies to assist these students (not to be used for diagnosis!), 11th: Designed and implemented SMH training for school site reps and principals based on needs assessments, current research, and best practices (**training is absolutely critical for program success and sustainability**), and 12th: Ongoing survey of site reps and principals re: ways to improve SMH services and to celebrate successes.

PROGRAM EFFECTS: Faculties and Principals report improved academic and behavioral performance for students as a result of SAT interventions. Parents of SAT students report similar outcomes. Site reps assessment shows significantly enhanced confidence levels in working with faculties on SMH concerns and solutions than prior to training.

LOOKING AHEAD: Program sustainability is a major goal through Steering Committee planning, site rep discussions, and SAT training for program enhancements.