

A GUIDE TO DECREASING ACCESS CHALLENGES BY
INCREASING ACCESS AWARENESS

Background and Legislation:

In 2019, the United States Congress enacted revision (HR1109) to the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290hh) (relating to children and violence), to extend projects relating to children and to provide access to school-based comprehensive mental health programs. HR1109 Section 581, secures assistance to local communities and school districts in applying a public health approach to mental health services.

During the 2020 spring session of the Alabama Legislature, considerable attention was given to mental and emotional student health and wellness. Schools are critical in identifying and supporting students with mental health issues. Research has shown that interventions conducted by comprehensive school-based mental health have been associated with enhanced academic performance, decreased need for special education, fewer disciplinary encounters, increased engagement with school, and elevated rates of graduation.

In March 2020, the Alabama Legislature provided requirements (HB341) for the school districts to employ a mental health service coordinator. This legislation was signed into law by Governor Kay Ivy in March 2020.

Mental Health Timelines:

The goal of DCS is to provide the necessary support and interventions in a timely manner to ensure students' needs are being met.

Mental health screening or assessment is provided within 30 days of a referral for school-based or community-based mental health services. School-based mental health services will be initiated 30 days after screening or assessment has been completed. Community-based mental health services will begin within 30 days after the school or district has generated a mental health referral.

Threat Assessment Teams:

School and district staff will be trained to use a standardized threat and crisis assessment protocol. The school-based threat assessment team, also known as the School-Based Crisis Team (SBCT), is expected to ensure coordination of resources, assessments, and interventions for students. Interventions will be aligned with the existing Behavior Matrix, Student Code of Conduct, the DCS

Crisis Threat Guidance and Protocol, as well as all relevant policies and statues. Reporting protocols for the team actions will include notification to relevant groups (e.g., parents, guardians, law enforcement, teachers, DHR) as needed and completion of appropriate forms in the Crisis Threat and Guidance Protocol (Form A and Form B).

The district-based threat assessment team, also known as the District-Based Crisis Team (DBCT), will provide oversight, monitoring, and compliance functions for each SBCT. The DBCT includes the newly established Mental Health Services Coordinator, Director of Exceptional Student Services and Supervisor, School Social Work, School Health, School Counseling, School Security.

When a student is being provided intervention/services due to a previous threat and the student transfers to a different school site, the administrator will communicate with the receiving schools’ administrator to ensure that services and interventions remain in place until the threat assessment team at the receiving school independently determines the need for continuing intervention services.

Data and Evidence Reviewed:

of students who received mental health screenings or assessments
of students referred to school-based mental health services providers
of students referred to community-based mental health services providers
of students who received school-based interventions, services, or assistance
of students who received community-based interventions, services, or assistance
of suicide assessments at your site
of threat assessments at your site
of law enforcement interactions initiated at your site
of newly registered student marked “yes” for the school-based mental health services

Process for Identifying and Delivering Evidence-Based Interventions:

The district relies on processes and teams already embedded in the schools to ensure that interventions are evidence-based. Specifically, Problems Solving Teams (PSTs) that meet at all school sites, monthly, to analyze both school and individual data using Response to Intervention (RtI) and can include mental health into that and have that as a portion into the RtI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to approach problem solving.

These practices and supporting teams use a consistent problem-solving model: problem identification; problem analysis and barrier identification; action plan and implementation; and progress monitoring and evaluation to address concerns. These PSTs are led by school administrators, and include classroom teachers, student services staff, and exceptional student educators to systematically consider school, small group, and individual issues. Parent involvement is actively sought and is an essential part of all these processes.

The MTSS approach to problem-solving is amenable to the mental health and student safety issues currently facing schools. This approach begins with universal screening utilizing Early Warning Systems for identifying students who may be at risk of missing key educational milestones, to diagnose the needs of at-risk students, and to identify interventions that may help at-risk students get back on track to graduate. School-based student services personnel (e.g. school counselors, school health staff, school psychometrists, school social workers) meet with students and parents or guardians to develop and implement behavior support plans while providing necessary assistance in learning appropriate behavior and developing self-management skills. Currently, referrals to both internal and external service providers for academic and other wraparound services are available to students through recommendations by student services personnel.

These recommendations result in specific efforts to differentiate and personalize support and to establish systems that will enhance the identification and delivery of student interventions along the spectrum of available services. At this time, an initial request for services occurs when a student is referred to student services for assistance. The district is in the process of developing a tool that will automate and streamline elements of this process. The tool will be accessible to educational professionals to allow for synthesis of information about existing interventions, including intervention history, regardless of student mobility between sites. This tool will allow for monitoring and more intentional focus on usage, frequency, and outcomes.

Existing Referral Procedures for School-Based and Community Based Services:

Upon receiving referrals, student services personnel access the student's case, and coordinate service delivery. All referrals comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protections of student privacy as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements for medical information.

Current processes allow for referral or service delivery through the following mechanisms:

- On site by student services personnel.
- On site by the community agency, SpectraCare Health Systems, Inc., as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement.
- Via community referrals created by district personnel to receive services in the community.
- Via agency access letters allowing for private providers to initiate and deliver student care on school campuses.

Capacity and Credentials of Current Mental Health Providers:

Current DCS mental health providers are typically referred to as Student Services personnel. These personnel include school psychometrists, school counselors, school health staff, and school social workers.

SpectraCare Health Systems, Inc. Partnership:

The School Board has approved SpectraCare Health Systems, Inc. to serve as the managing entity of contracted community providers, who will deliver evidence-based mental health services to students including:

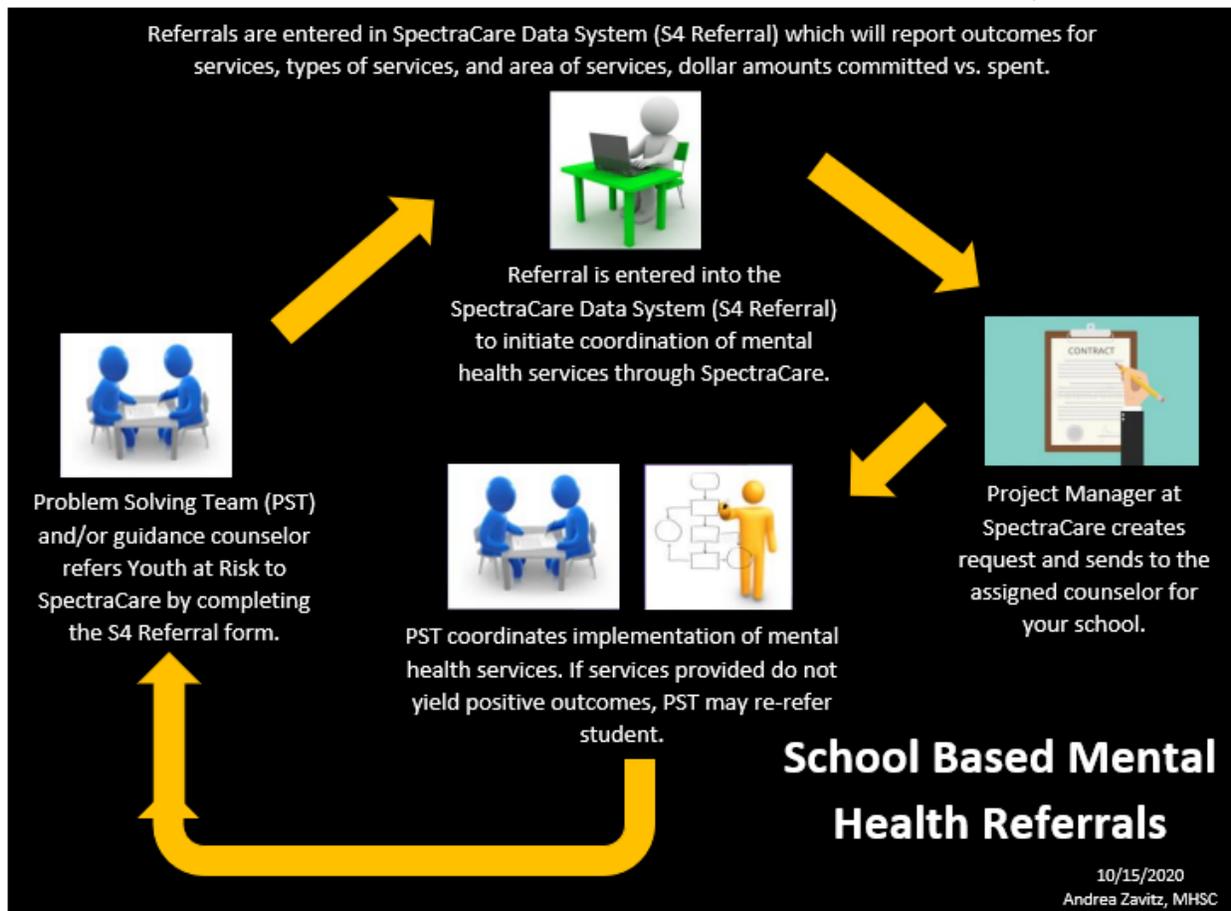
- Mental Health Assessments
- Mental Health and Co-Occurring Diagnoses
- Mental Health Interventions, Including Onsite Crisis Care
- Mental Health Treatments
- Mental Health Transition/Recovery Supports

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS/AFFILIATES TIER 2/3 LEVEL OF SUPPORT



DCS MENTAL HEALTH TEAM/ SPECTRA CARE HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC. REFERRAL PROCESS

The following graphic illustrates the process by which school-based student services personnel will refer students to SpectraCare Health Systems, Inc.:



Description of Mental Health Services:

The Mental Health Services Coordinator was hired to work directly with district personnel and contract community mental health providers. This person manages the contract with selected mental health providers, including case management, documentation compliance, provider monitoring and data receipt, payment for services rendered, contract budget management, and coordination of care between students and providers (including the student's primary care provider and other providers working with the student). This person collaborates with the School-Based Crisis Team (SBCT) and the District-Based Crisis Team (DBCT). This person will also provide professional development resources that promote mental health awareness, prevention, and intervention programs and initiatives. This position supports schools monitoring the implementation and utilization of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to include providing social emotional learning skill building to targeted students. This position is necessary to support the fidelity of implementation and scope of the work required for school-based mental health services. This person will provide oversight of S4 referrals as well as coordination of effort with internal and external service providers, divisional staff, and experts on the creation of professional development resources; such as evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, and universal screening protocols. Duties will also include the monitoring and data reporting mechanisms required for students referred for care.

To increase time spent for student services on mental health, Dothan City Schools is proposing the following updated policy: *DCS will follow best practices by ensuring that school counselors are dedicating their time to providing direct and indirect counseling services to students. These services to students include: individual, small group, and classroom counseling, preventative and responsive services including crisis/mental health counseling as needed, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and community agencies, advocacy for students, referral services and data analysis.*

The following data represents updated student services personnel ratios for Dothan City Schools: School Psychometrists: 1:2,052, School Counselors: 1:357, School Social Workers: 1:4,105.

Partner Collaboration:

Partnerships with community agencies and providers will be the foundation of this model. DCS expects that the SBCT will have clear assessment, diagnostic, intervention, treatment, and recovery protocols in place with these providers. These partnerships will include, but not limited to:

- Alabama Baptist Children's Home
- Alabama Department of Education

- Alabama Department of Mental Health
- Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Bradford Health Services
- Beacon Children’s Hospital
- Care Network of Alabama
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Resources
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Dothan—Houston County Emergency Management Agency
- Dothan Police Department
- Federal, state, and local courts
- Flowers Hospital
- Guardian Ad Litem
- House of Ruth
- Houston County Sheriff Department
- Laurel Oaks Behavioral Health Center
- Private Providers
- School Police Officers (SPOs)
- School Resource Officers (SROs)
- Southeast Health
- SpectraCare Health Systems, Inc.
- South Alabama American Red Cross
- Supplemental Services 4 Student Success

Evidence-Based Programs and Services:

The mental health services and initiatives supported by this allocation will reinforce and extend existing programs and interventions to help more students. The district does have several evidence-based behavior management and intervention programs in place. These begin at Tier 1 of the MTSS model and include interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 for selected students. The current array of program offerings includes:

- Class Wide Positive Behavior Supports
- Houston County Truancy and Dropout Prevention Program
- Check In/Check Out
- (What Substance Abuse education do we use?)
- Restorative Practices
- School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Alabama Safe Schools Initiative
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Too Good for Violence and Bullying Prevention
- Trauma Sensitivity Training

- Youth Mental Health First Aid

Professional Development Needs:

- Counseling Skill Building
- Child Advocacy Center
- Mental Health Awareness for Staff, Students, Families, and the Community
- Mental Health “Train the Trainer” In-Service
- MTSS Processes and Best Practices
- SEL Community Building Sessions
- SEL Strategies (such as mindfulness)
- Sex-Trafficking Awareness—Erin’s Law
- Early Warning Systems
- Data-Based Decision-Making Model
- Suicide Assessment Protocol
- Threat Assessment Protocol
- Trauma Sensitivity Training
- Youth Mental Health First Aid

Program Implementation and Outcomes:

Dothan City Schools will demonstrate its commitment to meeting the requirements of the Mental Health Assistance Allocation through the provision of the following metrics as outlined on the Outcomes and Expenditures Report Checklist:

- Students who receive screenings or assessments.
- Students who are referred to either school-based or community-based providers for services or assistance.
- Students who receive either school-based or community-based interventions, services or assistance.
- School-based and community-based mental health providers, including licensure type, paid for from funds provided through the allocation.
- Contract-based collaborative efforts or partnerships with community mental health programs, agencies, or providers.

Additional Emergency Management Information:

Dothan City Schools recognizes the importance of being an advocate for students, staff and personnel on our campuses. The mission of DCS is to promote a culture of safety and respect while demonstrating best practice in all areas of safety and site security. DCS works collaboratively with all public safety agencies in Dothan-Houston County and is an essential partner with the

Dothan-Houston County Emergency Management Agency. DCS embraces its emergency support function role and works with the Dothan Police Department, Houston County Sheriff Department, American Red Cross, and other local agencies to manage a catastrophic event.

District Crisis Response:

Student Services personnel (i.e., school social workers, school health), the District-Based Crisis Team, and Community Partners like SpectraCare, provide support to schools during times of crisis at district sites. System site crises may include: a death of a student or staff member, a natural disaster, and other traumatic events that impact the school community. Services provided by the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) include: individual and group counseling for students, faculty and staff; small and large group presentations; and consultation with administration, families, and community agencies. Services are designed to support, not supplant, services offered by school-based staff members. The Mental Health Services Coordinator will organize the responding CIT according to need indicated by the type of the event and those impacted. In the event of a catastrophic and/or mass casualty incident (i.e., a hurricane, school shooting), the District Crisis Plan will be utilized and implemented by the Assistant Superintendent of Auxiliary Services.

DCS Employee Assistance:

An Employee Assistance Program which, through outside professional counseling, may provide help for administrators and their families in areas including, but not limited to, emotional disorders, chemical (alcohol or drug) abuse, and/or marital, financial, family, legal, or occupational problems. Employees can self-refer or be referred by Human Resources. The Employee Assistance Program is available for all DCS employees.

Any questions regarding the Employee Assistance Program should be directed to the Human Resources Director, Patrick Mallory.

The 2022-2023 Annual Mental Health Guide is subject to Divisional and School Board of Dothan City Schools' Approval.