



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Hanover County

Program Title: Hanover County School-Based Mental Health Services

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Ivy T. Sager

Title: Executive Director

Department: Hanover Community Services Board

Telephone: 804-365-4289 Website: www.hanovercounty.gov

Email: itsager@hanovercounty.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: James P. Taylor

Title: Deputy County Administrator

Signature: *James P. Taylor*

SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HANOVER COUNTY



2022 VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD SUBMISSION

Hanover County, Virginia



Executive Summary

School-Based Mental Health Services in Hanover County, Virginia were created to provide students with access to therapeutic supports within a familiar, reassuring setting. This program was made possible through the efforts of Hanover County Community Services Board (HCCSB) and Hanover County Public Schools (HCPS) who, together, responded to the mental health crisis facing many of its high school students. The goal of this partnership was to reduce the barriers preventing students from accessing services, while enhancing their social, emotional, and academic wellbeing by providing behavioral health interventions. A full-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker was fully imbedded in the school environment and worked alongside existing school counselors to address concerns related to the challenges impacting a student's ability to function successfully. The model created allowed for students to receive an assessment, care coordination, brief intervention, outreach, and linkage to additional resources, including an option for long-term outpatient therapy within the school itself. As a result, students reported feeling more open to receiving help when it was offered in this format.

Brief Overview

Hanover County Community Services Board (HCCSB) and Hanover County Public Schools (HCPS) joined together to better serve students and their families by increasing access to mental health services within the schools. Hanover County's School-Based Mental Health services offered an innovative solution for students struggling with mental health challenges. A Licensed Clinical Social Worker, trained in a variety of treatment modalities, was imbedded in the Counseling Department at a local comprehensive school to provide on-going services to students within the school environment. The goal of this partnership was to reduce the barriers preventing students from accessing support by providing behavioral health interventions. The model created allowed for students to receive an assessment, care coordination, brief intervention, outreach, and linkage to additional resources, including an option for long-term outpatient therapy within the school itself.

School-Based Mental Health Services in Hanover County

The Problem

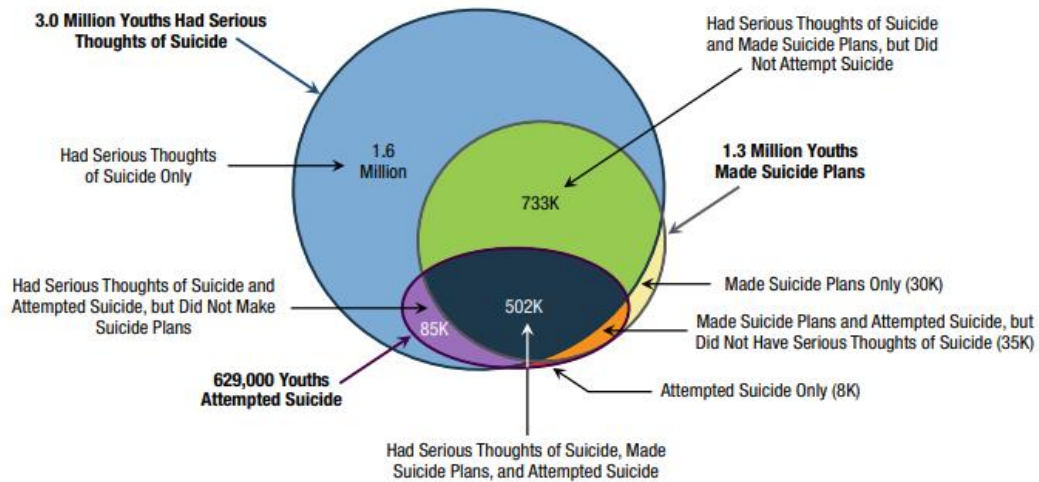
Over the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in mental health challenges across the United States of America; this has been particularly noticeable in adolescents. According to the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), 13 percent of adolescents reported having a major depressive episode in 2019, a 60 percent increase from 2007. Suicide rates among those ages 10 to 24, stable from 2000 to 2007, increased by close to 60 percent by 2018, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

According to The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

- Most mental health conditions are identified by the time a person is 24-years-old.
- One in six youth have a mental health condition, like anxiety or depression.
- Only one in three youth have access to mental health services.
- Early treatment has been proven to be more effective and can help young people stay in school and on track to achieving their life goals.
- For people between the ages of 15-40 years experiencing symptoms of psychosis, there is an average delay of 74 weeks (nearly 1.5 years) before getting treatment.
- Untreated or inadequately treated mental illness can lead to high rates of school dropout, unemployment, substance use, arrest, incarceration, and suicide.

(Mental Health in Schools | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2022)

Youths Aged 12 to 17 with Serious Thoughts of Suicide, Suicide Plans, or Suicide Attempts in the Past Year, 2020



3.0 Million Youths Aged 12 to 17 Had Serious Thoughts of Suicide, Made Suicide Plans, or Attempted Suicide in the Past Year

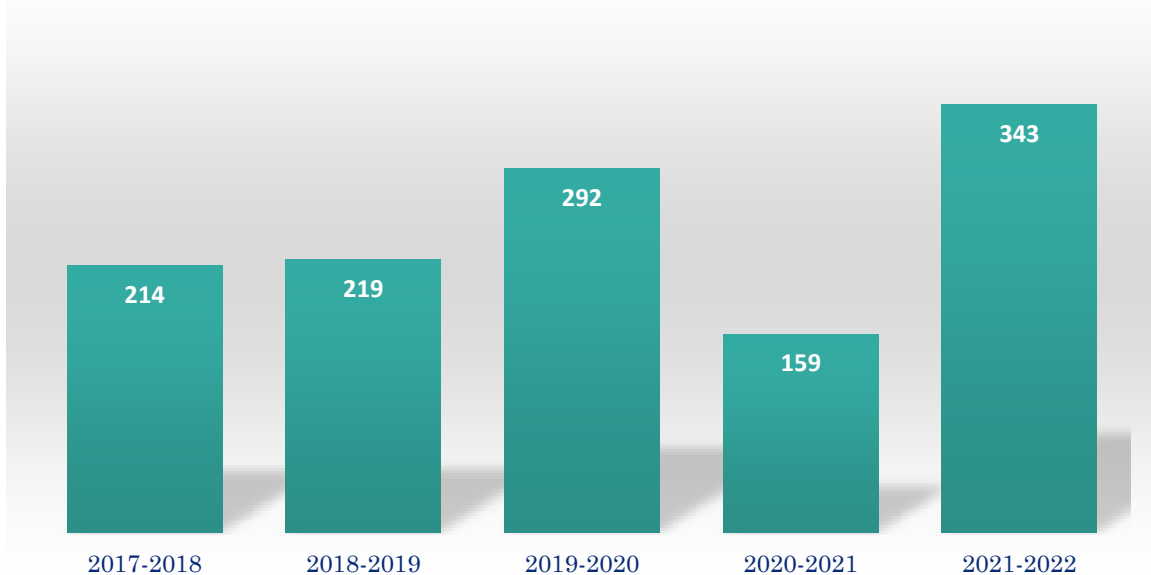
(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021)

While these figures are staggering across all domains, this mental health crisis has, perhaps, been most acutely felt within school systems across America, as students have struggled to reintegrate into a traditional learning environment and teachers have struggled to support students as quarantines imposed by the pandemic were lifted.

The Solution

Hanover County in Virginia was not immune to these nation-wide trends. As these soaring rates of mental health disorders became visible on a local level, the Hanover County Community Services Board (HCCSB) closely monitored the internal and external data related to the needs of youths within its County, in addition to the number of suicide screenings reported by Hanover County Public Schools (HCPS) (see below); all validated the need for additional support.

HCPS Suicide Screenings



NOTE:

2019-2020 – in person school interrupted March 2020
2020-2021 – fewer in-person students because of the pandemic
2021-2022 – data through May 2022

In 2020, HCCSB and HCPS joined together to better serve students and their families by increasing access to mental health services within the schools. The research clearly showed that School-Based Mental Health programs address four reasons that youth do not seek additional help:

- 1) Limited mental health knowledge/understanding of help-seeking
- 2) Social factors, including social stigma and embarrassment
- 3) Perceived confidentiality and the ability to trust an unknown person
- 4) Systematic and structural barriers, including financial cost, availability of help, and logistical barriers

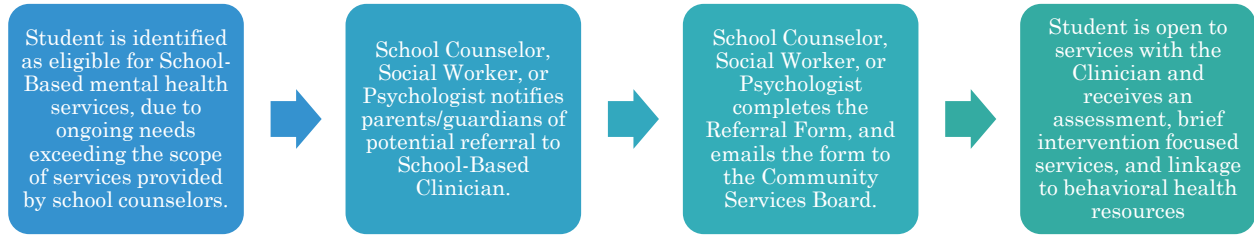
(Radez et al., 2020)

Hanover County's School-Based Mental Health services offered an innovative solution for students struggling with mental health challenges. A Licensed Clinical Social Worker, trained in a variety of treatment modalities, was imbedded in the Counseling Department at a local comprehensive school to provide on-going services to students within the school environment. Through consultation with parents, school counselors, school social workers, administrators, and other professionals, this therapist became an irreplaceable resource for identified students in need of additional behavioral health support.

This partnership was made possible through the efforts of HCCSB and HCPS who, together, responded to the crisis facing many of its high school students. The goal of this partnership was to reduce the barriers preventing students from accessing support, while enhancing their overall emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing by providing behavioral health interventions. The model created allowed for students to receive an assessment, care coordination, brief intervention, outreach, and linkage to additional resources, including an option for long-term outpatient therapy within the school itself.

The efficacy of the program was carefully observed and enthusiastically endorsed by stakeholders across the County. Through ongoing conversations with the HCCSB Board of Directors and Senior Leadership, the HCPS Superintendent and School Board, and the County's Board of Supervisors, the pilot was expanded to another local high school and plans were further enacted to place a Clinician in every secondary school by the year 2024. Additionally, neighboring counties have seen the value of this model and have sought to implement similar programs within their own school systems.

The customized approach that Hanover County has taken for this specific program follows this basic flow:



The Program

The program itself aimed to provide students with access to clinical mental health support within a familiar, reassuring setting. The Clinician worked alongside school counselors to address concerns related to the challenges impacting students' ability to function successfully. The Clinician was fully imbedded within the school environment to provide direct intervention and consultation. Examples of this integration included having an office in the school counseling department to meet directly with students, attending school counseling department meetings, sitting on school committees related to mental health initiatives, and supporting universal efforts to address mental health concerns within the school environment.

The Clinician carried a caseload of students that were referred, directly from school staff, to the program for individual or group mental health support. The Clinician's integration within the school environment allowed for referrals to be made quickly and offered the opportunity for ongoing collaboration throughout the process. Meeting within the school environment allowed students to feel safe, while reducing barriers to access and allowing

for natural collaboration. Students reported feeling more open to receiving mental health interventions in this format, as their school counselor was able to describe the program in detail and introduce them to the Clinician directly; thus, safety and trust were built quickly and problem areas were addressed holistically.

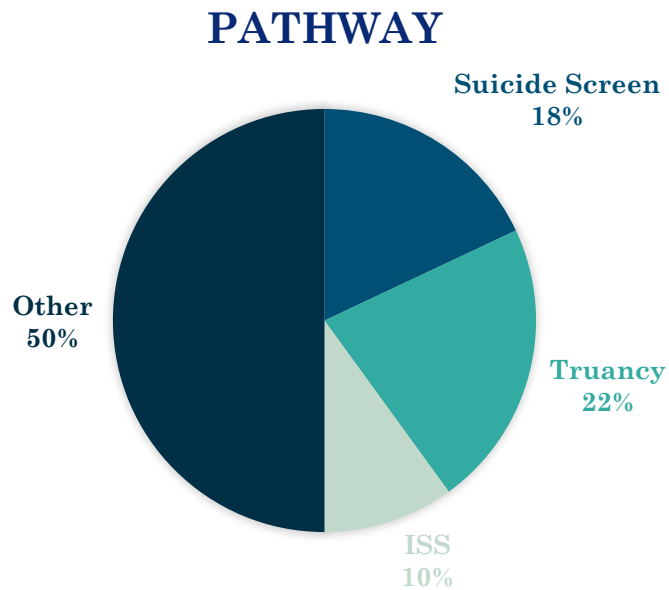
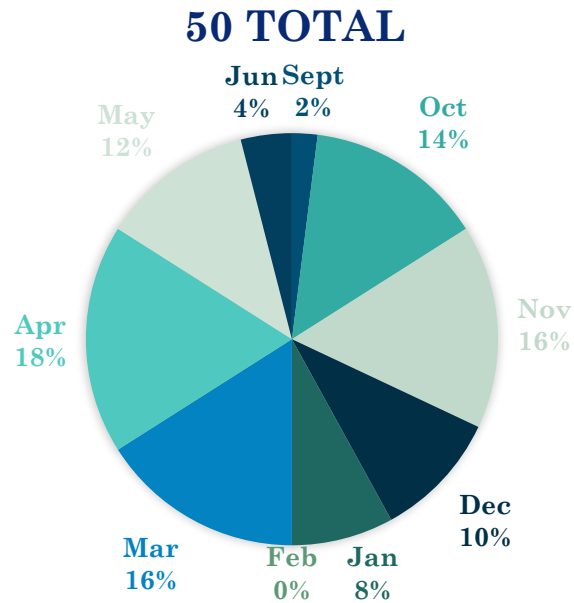
The Financing and Staffing

The budget for this initiative was \$120,000. The cost primarily covered the salary of a qualified Clinician, clinical and supervisory oversight, and basic equipment. Since the expansion of the program, funding has transitioned into a jointly-financed program, further illustrating the partnership between HCCSB and HCPS. The services delivered by the Clinician are not typically reimbursed by a third-party insurance and are provided without cost to the student.

The program is staffed by one full-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker, per school setting, who is supported by one full-time Licensed Clinical Supervisor. The Clinician is employed at the HCCSB.

The Results

During the first year of the program, 50 students were referred for services, all for a variety of reasons.



40 of those referrals were actively engaged throughout the entirety of the intervention process; over half of those who were engaged were open to receiving long-term supports in the community upon discharge. The testimonials of those involved with this program consistently spoke to its success:

“I have been working with [a student] for over a year and have discussed outside mental health counseling. The student has always been open to it but also timid. I referred him to [this Clinician] near the end of the school year after he reached a really tough breaking point. He had been trying so hard to be strong and was internalizing everything to negative thoughts on himself. [This Clinician] was the bridge the school and family needed to get him the support he needs and deserves. I do not think this student would be meeting with an [sic] mental health counselor without [this Clinician’s] help. He felt comfortable literally walking across the hall from my office to meet with a counselor for the first time. She helped distinguish his needs and concerns and match him with the perfect person at the CSB office. She helped send his grandmother gentle reminders to set up the intake. I think having [this Clinician] there during his intake helped ease the anxiety with the student and his grandmother too. This was a huge step for this family and [we] are grateful that this student is now getting the support he needs. This story is a prime example of it taking a village! When we have the opportunity to work together, we can really help support the families in our community at a higher level.”

(HCPS School Counselor)

“...I feel that our sessions in the group setting and one on one really helped me to be able to talk and express what I was feeling... and [gave] me the tools to be able to open up to friends and family and strengthen my relationships!”

(HCPS Student)

“[This Clinician] has been amazing to work with, as she meets with a few of our students in the functional academics program. Her passion and empathy is clear every time she meets with a student, even when they are in crisis. She embodies the character traits of our school each and every day! Lauren has proven to be a true asset to students of MHS. She has shown compassion, empathy, and diligence in assisting our students in crisis and those in need of emotional support.”

(HCPS Teacher)

“First off, this is a PHENOMENAL resource for high schoolers. ‘Back in my day,’ there was so much stigma attached to having depression, anxiety, ADHD, etc... you didn’t tell people. And we STRUGGLED. As adults, finding out that this is completely normal, it’s so refreshing. Especially with COVID. If you have a headache, you take Tylenol. Can’t see? Wear glasses. Mental health is just as, if not moreso [sic], important. Simply coming from someone that isn’t Mom, is helpful at her age. I truly can’t thank you enough.”

(HCPS Parent)

“This partnership between the CSB and the schools has been extremely beneficial for our clients. Students who would have otherwise gone unnoticed or had mental health issues that were undetected were able to receive the short-term help they needed in a timely, empathic manner, and were then able to transition to long-term services with ease.”

(HCCSB Staff)

Although the program most directly impacted those students who benefitted from its assessments and interventions, the presence of a mental health professional offered a valuable resource to the school as a whole. The Clinician was able to provide guidance and support to the school counseling department, in addition to the staff and administration.

There remains a significant need for mental health support in communities across America. The challenges being faced by adolescents are not lessening; some are even intensifying. However, for those who have the benefit of knowledge, support, trust, and access to the right services, a need may be met and a life may be saved. That was and is the goal of the School-Based Mental Health program in Hanover County.

There is a well-known story, adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley:

“One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the tide. As he walked, he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one. Puzzled, the man and asked what he was doing. Without looking up, the boy simply replied, ‘I’m saving these starfish, Sir.’ The old man chuckled aloud, ‘Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference will it make?’ The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, ‘It made a difference to that one!’”

This program has made a difference.