



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** 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: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming  
Program Category: Health and Human Services

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## **Program Overview**

Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming is an integrated program of mental health support and services developed by Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services (HAMHDS) in partnership with Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS). This collaboration provides mental health services and support to students with a serious emotional disturbance within the school setting. This proactively eliminates many of the systemic barriers to accessing mental health services that students and families often encounter, including financial barriers, transportation, clinician availability, lack of awareness of services and social stigmas. The program includes the hiring and placement of a full-time licensed mental health professional to provide outpatient counseling using evidence-based practices through a trauma-informed approach onsite at the HCPS Campus of Virginia Randolph. The licensed mental health professional also provides consultative support and professional learning to the HCPS school-based mental health team, building administrators and faculty/staff. The program also includes the hiring and placement of a full-time family support partner to work directly with families of the youth identified for services and outreach to families who may be hesitant to participate in services or who may not have had experience with (or have had negative experiences) in accessing mental health services.

## **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

Like many localities and school divisions across the U.S., HAMHDS and HCPS were working to discern how to best address youth mental health concerns that, while present prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, were greatly exacerbated by pandemic-related traumatic stressors and disruptions to treatment and services. What was being seen locally was directly aligned with nationwide surveys of youth showing increases in specific mental health symptoms, including anxiety, depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in five children in the U.S., either currently or at some point during their life, is experiencing a seriously debilitating mental illness. Both HAMHDS and HCPS recognized that schools were a natural setting to support student mental health and that school-age children who receive any behavioral and/or mental health services, 70-80% receive them at school. Therefore, a partnership was constructed outlining HCPS' commitment to establishing a collaborative partnership with HAMHDS to provide clinical mental health services to students with serious emotional disturbance within the school setting. Before this partnership, HAMHDS served as a community partner and consultant to HCPS by providing mental health services within the

community setting and professional learning opportunities for our staff. This strengthened and significantly expanded the existing partnership while addressing and eliminating many systemic barriers preventing Henrico County's youth and families from accessing quality mental health treatment.

### **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

In December 2021, the U.S. surgeon general released an advisory identifying the mental health needs of children as a significant public health challenge and calling on the institutions surrounding young people to implement systemic change to address this challenge. Additionally, unaddressed mental health challenges can have a significant negative influence on homelessness, poverty, employment, safety and the local economy. HAMHDS and HCPS heard this call and came together to implement a Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming model that builds on the strengths of both agencies and increases the access of Henrico County's youth and families to critical, trauma-informed mental health services. Because these are challenges faced by localities nationwide, the program is a transferable solution.

### **How Program Was Carried Out**

Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming is a collaboration between HAMHDS and HCPS. In December 2021, a grant opportunity was published by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, noting funds to address mental health needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic were available to increase school-based mental health services to students and families. The grant focused on providing mental health services to students with serious emotional disturbance in local educational agencies with demonstrated need, in collaboration with their local community services board. HAMHDS and HCPS were awarded this grant starting April 1, 2022, with the plan of embedding a licensed mental health professional and family support partner at the Campus of Virginia Randolph. A licensed mental health professional was hired and placed on Aug. 15, 2022. A family support partner was hired and began Oct. 24, 2022.

The Campus of Virginia Randolph was chosen as the pilot school for this program due to the unique needs presented by the school population. Campus of Virginia Randolph is an alternative school setting that includes the Virginia Randolph Education Center, the Academy at Virginia

Randolph and the Program for Academic and Career Empowerment, or PACE. Students enroll in these programs via application, through their individualized education program, or through the HCPS Disciplinary Review Office.

The Virginia Randolph Education Center is designed to support K-6 grade students with disabilities who demonstrate significant challenges with appropriate behavior in the comprehensive school setting. The program provides both academic and behavioral educational services, intending to give students intensive structure and support in order to equip them with the tools needed for academic and/or behavioral improvement, so that they are able to obtain positive outcomes and return to their home schools.

PACE is a program for over-age seventh and eighth grade students who are seeking an accelerated path to overcome retention. This program offers small, structured classrooms with intensive behavioral and academic support. The program is intended to reduce students' potential for dropout and to provide a safe and supportive environment for students who have struggled academically and behaviorally in the traditional school setting.

The Academy at Virginia Randolph is an alternative high school program for students in grades 9-12. Students who attend the school receive instruction in small and supportive environments with lower student-to-teacher ratios, earn a 22-credit standard diploma and have increased opportunities in career and technical education programming.

The licensed mental health professional provides individual, group and family therapy using evidence-based treatment approaches, such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy and adolescent community reinforcement approach. Individual sessions typically occur weekly, and family therapy sessions are conducted as needed. The licensed mental health professional is currently collaborating with school-based mental health staff, such as counselors and social workers, to develop and co-facilitate evidence-based groups such as Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools and Bounce Back.

Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming has been unique in its ability to engage with various county systems at multiple levels. The licensed mental health professional has had the opportunity to engage with students who are detained, as there is an

already existing partnership with the Henrico Juvenile Detention Home. This has increased the knowledge of both school staff and detention home staff regarding students' individual needs and allowed students to continue their work in therapy while detained. The licensed mental health professional has connected families with the same-day access process at HAMHDS when additional support or specific services are needed beyond what can be provided in the school setting. Same-day access is how individuals are assessed and linked to programs and services with HAMHDS. Consultation about the same-day access process and available services through HAMHDS is more readily available to school staff and administrators due to the licensed mental health professional and family support partner's attendance in weekly intervention team meetings with school staff. Attendance in these meetings also allows greater collaboration between HAMHDS and HCPS for the specific needs of students and their families. The licensed mental health professional has partnered with HCPS to offer support and resources to staff members and administration following several stressors and tragedies that have occurred in the 2022-23 school year.

In addition to the licensed mental health professional, the family support partner is an individual who has had personal, lived experience with a family member or loved one with mental illness. The family support partner is trained in the high-fidelity wraparound model and is currently pursuing certification as a peer recovery specialist. The family support partner role in the school is unique, as it focuses on engaging families in their student's treatment, providing support for the family's identified needs and advocating for the family's voice and choice. The family support partner's role is to help the family, who may have had their own school challenges, to feel confident and comfortable accessing and advocating for school services for their child. The family support partner also provides support to the family to elevate their own mental health by assisting them in accessing needed services.

Students and their families are identified for referral to comprehensive school-based mental health services and programming through the weekly intervention team meetings or direct referral through the school counselor, social worker or psychologist. Students who are referred have a complexity of needs, including past trauma, substance use, suicidal ideation, self-harm, truancy and behavioral concerns. Students and families with financial, transportation or other barriers to receiving mental health services elsewhere are prioritized.

Progress and emerging needs are discussed weekly within the school-based mental health team and with HCPS in the intervention team. Discharge from these services are determined by the student's self-report of symptoms, an improvement in attendance patterns, a decrease in behavioral referrals and a change in academic performance.

### **Financing and Staffing**

The primary cost for this program comes from the two position's salaries, the licensed mental health professional and family support partner. The salary and benefits for the two positions equal approximately \$153,622 annually. The cost of these positions are covered by federal American Rescue Plan Act funds during the 3.5-year grant period. A focus for the collaborative team during the grant period is to calculate costs associated with sustaining the program following the conclusion of the ARPA funding, including the possibility of third-party reimbursement via insurance providers.

HCPS and HAMHDS have coordinated to share responsibility for providing staff with what they need to succeed. In addition to funding for positions, other costs associated with the program include technology, laptops, cell phones and office supplies. Training costs are also associated with the program, including funding evidence-based training and certification in programs such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma in school and adolescent-community reinforcement approach. There is also training associated with becoming a certified peer recovery specialist for staff in the family support partner role.

Through the process of developing this program, the HCPS and HAMHDS collaborative team have created a blueprint for this program to be replicated in other school settings. If funding opportunities were provided to expand this program to additional schools, one consideration would be the creation of a dedicated supervisor for the school-based mental health teams.

### **Program Results**

Thus far in the initial year of implementation, Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming has had 37 different students meeting formally referred for clinical mental health services and interventions at the Campus of Virginia Randolph. After a referral is made by school staff, it is the parent or guardian's decision whether they would like for their child to engage in services, and of the 37 students referred, 27 students have engaged in services.

Successful discharge from services is measured by a self-reported decrease in symptoms, decrease in days missed from school, decrease in SI/HI, return to academic baseline and/or decrease in behavioral challenges as evidenced by fewer behavioral referrals or disciplinary infractions.

Additional outcome measures are being collected and tracked as part of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services grant. This includes monitoring any changes in the DLA-20 Functional Assessment, which is completed during the intake process, at six months after services begin and at discharge from services. Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services has also developed satisfaction surveys for parents, caregivers and/or students that are provided upon discharge and satisfaction services for school and community partners provided yearly.

While still in the first semester of implementation, the additional collection of quantitative outcome data to evaluate Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming is ongoing, including data related to school attendance, discipline/referrals and/or changes in the students' DLA-20 functional assessments. Of equal importance, qualitative data collected thus far includes reports from administrators, teachers, parents and students participating in the program that highlight the positive impact having a clinician and family support partner readily available in the school setting has made on the overall school climate as well as on the ability for students to access needed mental health services during the school day. Qualitative data has also reported improvements in mood, classroom behaviors, use of coping skills and relationship-building. In addition to the services students and families are receiving in the school, three families have been linked with and opened to case management, psychiatric and specific evidence-based services with HAMHDS.

### **Brief Summary**

As a result of a changing world and the pandemic, issues of mental health and well-being have never been more relevant for students at HCPS – and beyond – than they are now. Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming, a collaboration between Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services and HCPS, is a response to the growing need for mental health support in schools, and it has already led to a positive impact. The additional staff members at the Campus of Virginia Randolph have been instrumental in

meeting the needs of young students who require support from within the school. Various issues or reasons can make children more susceptible to mental health challenges, and having additional resources and professionals – both in and outside of HCPS – available to make students feel comfortable is invaluable. In only one semester, the collaborative effort of Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming has resulted in dozens of students receiving direct support, and many of the families, teachers and administrators involved have reported positive experiences with the program. The program could be a game-changer in how the county handles mental health in its students, no matter what age or challenge.



## Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Services and Programming Supplemental Material



[School Based Mental Health Services.pdf](#)