

Gaps in meeting the mental health needs of our students

I. Elementary Level

- **Whole-school programming**
- **Parent education/workshops**
- **Teacher education**
- **Availability for student needs due to working in different buildings-students may have to wait several days or over the weekend before follow-up, which can potentially cause ethical issues**
- **Advisory Board**

II. Intermediate Level

***teacher/staff education on specific mental illness**

***more consistent intake and follow up on students returning from psychiatric hospitalization or extended time in partial hospitalization program**

***more consistent follow up and support for students with mental illness who are on home instruction or attending Grizzly academy**

***more consistent follow up and support for students who have been held in the juvenile detention center**

***more consistent follow up and support of students who self harm**

***more consistent follow up and support for students who are currently homeless or in foster care**

***more consistent follow up for students who have had a suicide risk assessment**

***more consistent follow up for students who have received serious school consequences such as suspension or expulsion.**

***more home visits for students who have parents who are having social, emotional or academic struggles and parents are not currently active participants in their education (helping to bridge a supportive relationship between school and family)**

***more home visits for students with mental illness or behavioral problems whose parents have not consented to any type of counseling**

***counselor attendance at team meetings so that concerns that may indicate mental illness are identified quickly- as opposed to finding out when the problem is severe**

***increased close management of students with severe behavioral issues, including frequent support and collaboration with teachers and administration**

***increased collaboration with people in the community (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) who are working with our students with identified mental illness (getting release of information forms signed, asking for recommendations, sharing information about student progress**

***increased support for students with social skill deficits**

***increased support for students who are failing**

***increased follow up and support for students who are on a 504 for mental health concerns**

III. Middle School

- Start of the school year, limited secretarial hours
 1. Creating new students schedules, back and forth with schools, schedule pick up day coordination and students, schedule change requests, 504 distribution is at least an entire day right now
- Start of the school year counselors have 6.5 days - scheduling changes, registering new students, parent concerns, communicating with teachers about students, handling parent concerns - not enough time to get everything done. We put in extra time to make the first day comfortable for all students - extremely distressing for a middle school student to have something not right or not done
- No secretary in guidance office 1:15-2:30 pm every day
 1. Crisis situations that arise, no support
 2. Students and staff waiting vs disrupting counseling sessions
 3. Unattended office, unanswered phone calls, student support (sign in), safety concern for guidance office, when unattended.
- Registration of new students often cannot be accomplished as fast as parents want
 1. Wait time for records from other schools, communication with schools
- Students on 504 needing more support
 1. Esp. 7th grade: parents and students in distress the first few weeks of school
 - a) Discussing plans to improve for next year:
 - (1) Beginning of the year letter to all parents
 - (2) 8th grade letter to offer options instead of automatic meeting
 - (3) More support needed as far as groups, no time in beginning of year
 - (4) Used to call all parents the first few weeks of school and schedule reviews for September
 2. More coordination and consultation with teachers, PD for teachers
- 504 Procedures
 1. Scheduling a 504 meeting involves coordinating schedules of principals, parents and any teachers that need to be a part of the meeting and either their planning periods, getting coverage or a substitute to do this. It would take a lot of discussion with the secretary to make this happen, maybe more time than to just make the call myself. Parents sharing concerns at first phone call, allows for more productive meeting. Secretary could take over uploading documents and already distributes copies to teachers and student services.
 2. Protocol still evolving: Students who qualify for a 504 and evaluation meetings, PR-01 use, etc.
- Coordination of outside agencies and services
 1. Counselor turn over, school counselor oversight of ethics and management of school expectations - harm situations and communication between counselors and to parents when necessary.
 2. Have been assigned personnel with prevention that do not have counseling degrees or an understanding of their role or have never taught in the classroom or have counseling backgrounds (not this year-not since changeover to Bellefaire)
 3. It is difficult in the counseling relationship to "give" our students to another counselor, especially if that counselor is not skilled
- The gap is time when it comes to counselor duties with large amount of crisis situations
 1. Crisis situations involving harm happen more days than they do not at WMS

2. Beginning of the year is heightened crisis time AND now busy 504 time. Used to balance well with scheduling starting in January.
 3. Time/ remembering to communicate with teachers when necessary
- Discussion points to be aware of
 1. The counselor role: unconditional positive regard, entering their worldview, advocate, confidentiality. This is a different relationship than most other adults in the building.
 2. Usually not any allowance for recovery time for counselor from crisis and/or reactive situations
 3. Dealing with student harm, possible life and death situations very frequently, more days than not, often multiple times a day. The emotional, mental, physical strain acutely and in a persistent way given the counselor role
 4. Scheduling helps us get to know kids, start the relationship with a more mild topic, good way to get to know all the kids, have an open door for kids to see us. 504s are also a very logical role for school counselors as we are trained at meeting these needs and identification and are usually the phone call parents make with any issues. The gap is in the time to do all that is needed along with prioritizing crisis/responsive situations.
 5. There are not many students with behavior issues that we cannot help improve. The ESC behavior specialist is very helpful and comes to us when we need her for those that are difficult. A behavior-only person is not a gap for us, especially now that we have our ED unit.
 6. When we increased our time by 1 day for each school counselor, we decreased our caseload of students from about 650:1 to about 400:1 (or 1050:1 on days we had the whole MS building, each 1 day a week).
 - a) One we were able to work with only our caseload and in one grade band focus, we could plan and implement core curriculum lessons (from 2 lessons a year to nearly 20 - most being via video in IE) and more small groups, as well as have more follow through with supporting students and families that were returning from the hospital or other intensive type situations, create a mentoring program, a MS-focused advisory committee, clubs, PD for staff, mindfulness for various classes and staff, and apply for and receive the (intensive) National RAMP award, identified as a school that has evidence of meeting the criteria for a comprehensive school counseling program following the ASCA National Model.
 - b) We also were able to spend much more time on seemingly “smaller” issues that allowed us to get to know many more students, but also uncovered larger problems and were able to solve them more preventatively (example: attendance issues that families attributed to illness were actually unexpressed anxiety or depression or logistical issues of getting to school without missing as many days as the previous year: 43% of the 97 identified students improved attendance from >10 days to missing <10 days/year). We were also able to spend more time collecting data and evaluating it, getting incredible insight to help our program improve. For example, with our AIR Test small groups, a large percentage of students reported that they improved their test scores only because they knew we cared and were tracking their scores for improvement. 85% of the students identified improved their scores 10

points or more, 46% of the students passing at least one test they did not pass the previous year.

- c) The outside agencies and other counselors that we have been able to retain for more than one school year is working really well. PCS and Meagan Neumann. Meagan has already worked with more than 50 students in small group setting for us this school year, and because she is a school counselor, it is much lower maintenance for us as far as oversight, management and communication. Marie Hostetler works great with us in helping families enroll, and in communication and coordinating services to help students. The two main barriers we see for students getting this service is #1 parents not wanting their child to receive it and #2 money. The amount of students with these barriers is very small, less than 3 a year.

IV. High School

As mentioned in previous meetings, the ability to respond to students in the moment and offer ongoing support while effectively fulfilling High School counselor responsibilities that have greatly increased in the last few years, remains a challenge. Programs and tasks such as AP testing, 504s, CCP, EOC testing and graduation requirement tracking, Scholarship program, career programming, ongoing student scheduling, etc have become larger in nature and require the majority of our time. These growing fundamental and essential responsibilities have reduced our ability to provide direct services to students and grow a counseling program. Our gaps include the following:

- **Consistent ability to follow up with students experiencing crisis (returning from PHP, Risk Assessment, expulsion, MCJDC, etc)**
- **School-wide mental health classroom guidance and preventative programming**
- **Ability to provide small-groups consistently beyond prevention and private counseling**
 - **anxiety/stress, freshman transition, senior transition**
 - **Counseling space for groups, meetings, and de escalating**
- **Continuation of services for students who have an outside therapist but have ongoing struggles**
- **Communicating with, supporting and tracking data for students who are not full-time - Digital, Credit Recovery, Home Instruction, MCJS**
- **Coordinating/communicating/follow-through on-going support with 504 students**
- **Support of academically at risk students.**
- **Following up with students referred to outside services to confirm help is received or resources provided**
- **Parent programming for mental health**
- **Need to increase understanding of district and local resources available or channels of referral for students in need**