

2017-18 Evaluation of Transition Services

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At-a-Glance

The Psychological and Social Services (PSS) Department serves students who experience significant social, emotional, or academic difficulties. During the 2017-18 school year, the Transition Services part of the PSS program provided licensed specialists in psychology and social work, assigned to the Dallas Independent School District campuses, to assist students with the successful transition of returning to their home campus from the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), psychiatric hospital stays, and mental health related homebound placements. Transition Services received \$186,441 in Title I funds for the 2017-18 school year, used for personnel expenses.

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to study the extent the Transition Services program was implemented with fidelity, met expected outcomes as outlined in program documents, and impacted school climate. Data were collected and provided by the program staff from the PSS Department. Data were also collected from an evaluator generated survey and interviews with PSS staff. PSS had no way of flagging students returning from psychiatric hospitals and other treatment facilities; therefore, this data were not reported.

Campus Re-Entry Process

When students were released from off-campus facilities (DAEP, the JJAEP, psychiatric hospitals, and mental health related homebound placements) and re-enrolled at their home campus, PSS staff assigned to those campuses were notified by campus staff and a case review of the referral information was initiated to determine if there was an "immediate" need for Tier III interventions/strategies. These included individual or family counseling, referral to in-District or out-of-District resources, assistance with negotiating social support services, informal evaluation, and needs assessment specific to the student's needs. Tier III interventions/strategies were only provided with a signed PSS parental consent form. If no determination of "immediate" need was necessary, then Tier II interventions/strategies were implemented. Tier II interventions/strategies included monitoring attendance, academic progress, and discipline.

The services provided to transition students were documented and monitored by a campus-based multi-disciplinary screening committee. Clinicians, psychologists, and social workers assisted with

coordinating service delivery of mental health and social services needs to students in a timely manner.

The purpose of the transition supports in 2017-18 were to improve school achievement and attendance by assisting students to:

- remain on campus and avoid placement in a more restrictive school or community placement;
- improve behavior and school functioning; and
- reduce Juvenile Justice involvement.

Discipline Referrals

Table 1 shows the top student offenses that resulted in referrals to the DAEP in 2017-18. Drug offenses were most common (56.6%), and were slightly less than in 2016-17 (58.6%). Percents in **bold** indicate decreases for offenses committed in 2017-18, compared to similar offenses in 2016-17. Totals include duplicate cases due to multiple offenses committed by some.

Table 1: Offenses Leading to DAEP Placement in 2017-18

Offense	2016-17		2017-18	
	N	%	N	%
Drugs (non-felony)	1,170	58.6	1,096	56.6
Assault (Class C)	163	8.2	161	8.3
Repetitive Level I Offenses	163	8.2	171	8.8
Major Disruptive Behavior	97	4.9	93	4.8
Assault (Class A)	68	3.4	61	3.1
Alcohol (non-felony)	60	3.0	75	3.9
Profanity/obscene gesture	56	2.8	53	2.7
Fighting	47	2.4	56	2.9
Other	173	8.7	171	8.8
Total	1,997		1,937	

Source: 2016-17 and 2017-18 district student disciplinary records

Note: Percents in **bold** indicate a decrease from the previous school year. Totals include duplicate cases (Total N=192) due to multiple offenses committed by some students.

Student Demographics

A total of 1,745 students committed offenses that led to placement in the DAEP. Some of these students committed offenses multiple times (Total N=192) in 2017-18. Students attended the DAEP until completing the time (days) associated with the severity of the offense committed (range of 10 days to 1 year). The data indicated that slightly over half (54.7%) of the offenders were Hispanic (decrease from 63.9% in 2016-

17); 66.0 percent were male (decrease from 70.4% in 2016-17); and 29.3 percent were English Language Learners (decrease from 36.6% in 2016-17). Offenses committed by Special Education students (13.0%) increased in the 2017-18 school year, compared to offenses committed in 2016-17 (11.2%).

Table 2: 2017-18 Demographic Characteristics of Offenders

Variable	N	%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	955	54.7
African American	713	40.9
White	52	3.0
Other	23	1.3
Missing	2	0.1
Total	1,745	100.0
Gender		
Male	1,152	66.0
Female	591	33.9
Missing	2	0.1
Total	1,745	100.0
Special Groups		
English Lang. Learner	512	29.3
Special Education	227	13.0

Source: 2017-18 Chancery student data file

Program Challenges

Interview results showed that in its third year, the program continued to experience problems in tracking students after their release from the DAEP, re-enrolling them at their home campus, and PSS reaching out to them to provide services. Other challenges included:

- getting parents to sign the PSS consent form;
- students taking their time (days/weeks) to re-enroll at their home campus;
- students not returning to their home campus (parents not wanting their child returning to the same environment);
- at districtwide level, campus staff not notifying PSS staff members that a student had re-enrolled on their campus;
- PSS staff spending time locating transition students after release from the DAEP; and
- locating/identifying re-enrolled students released from a psychiatric hospital to provide the supports they need (i.e., 504 or Special Education placement, Youth and Family Services, etc.).

PSS Response to Challenges

A list of students released from the DAEP was provided periodically by the PSS clinician at the DAEP. This list of students was sent through an email alert to PSS staff at the home campuses where those students would be re-enrolling.

The PSS worked with the Truancy Department and the Red Bird Family Youth Center in 2017-18 to help with tracking and reaching transition students to address drug and alcohol related issues, among other services. The department also worked with each campus regarding attendance and setting up a system for notifying staff on the departure and arrival of students.

The PSS staff identified a child's inappropriate behavior that parents and family members should not ignore or overlook and the services that were readily available to help with these behaviors but only with written consent. The PSS also worked to build relationships with parents/guardians to educate and encourage them to participate in the services for their child.

The PSS made efforts to meet and form relationships with mental health hospitals in the area; however, each had its own system of releasing students. There were also issues because of compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that protected the privacy of students' medical and education records. PSS built relationships with the campus nurses, who because of their role on campuses, would be the first to know about these students and could alert the PSS staff.

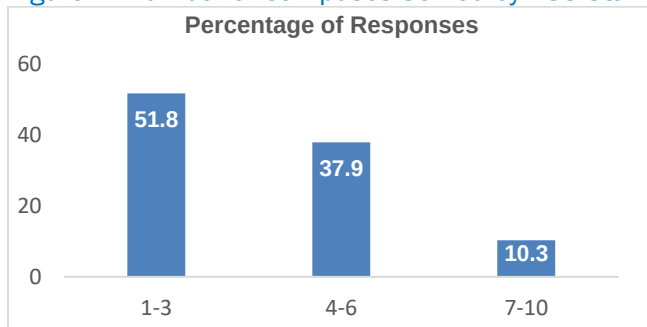
Staff Surveys

A survey was developed by the evaluator with the collaboration of the program manager and administered in the spring to a total of 42 PSS staff that included clinicians, psychologists, social workers and interns. The data were used to obtain feedback about the implementation and improvement of the Transition Services program.

A total of 29 staff members responded to the survey (69%). Overall, less than half of the respondents (48%) indicated that they agreed ("Agree"/"Strongly Agree") that the Transition Services was effective during the 2017-18 school year.

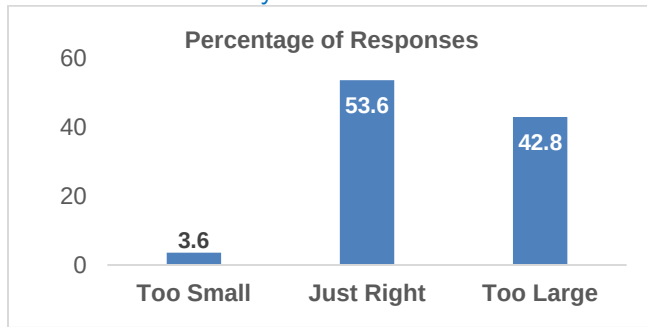
Survey results showed that 42 percent of the respondents were social workers, 52 percent were psychologists, and three percent, each, were clinicians and interns. Figure 1 shows that slightly over half (52%) of respondents served between 1-3 campuses. Other data showed that 64 percent of respondents served between 1-25 transition students. Figure 2 shows that approximately 54 percent of respondents indicated that their caseload was just the right size for them to handle. Half (50%) of the respondents specified that they met with the transition students in their caseload two to three times per month. (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Number of Campuses Served by PSS Staff



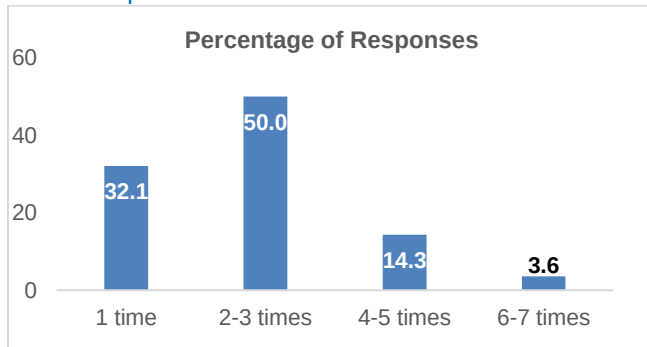
Source: 2017-18 Transition Services Survey

Figure 2: Responses to “The size of my caseload for the 2017-18 school year is...”



Source: 2017-18 Transition Services Survey

Figure 3: Responses to “On average, how many times did you meet with transition students in your caseload per month?”

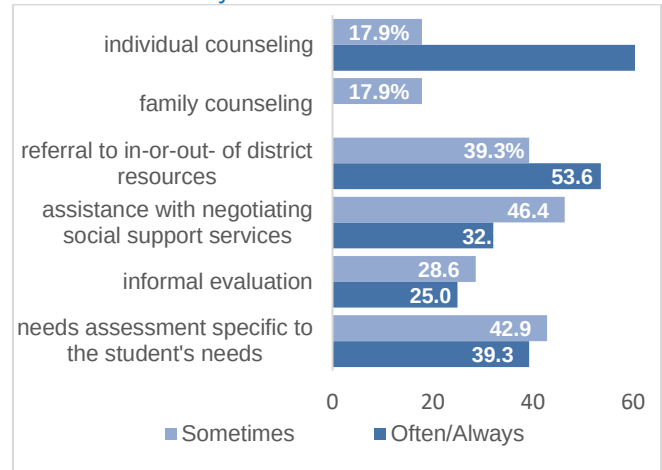


Source: 2017-18 Transition Services Survey

Most respondents (64.3%) indicated that they “Often”/ “Always”, provided individual counseling to transition students and 53 percent of respondents provided referrals to in- or out- of district resources (Figure 4). Notably, 82.1 percent of respondents specified that they “Rarely”/ “Never” provided family counseling services.

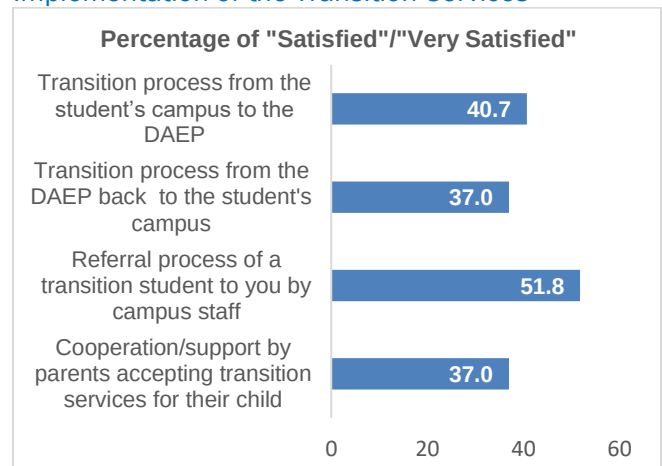
About half of respondents (51.8%) indicated that they were “Satisfied”/ “Very Satisfied” with the referral process of transition students to them by campus staff. Less than half (37%) were satisfied (“Satisfied”/ “Very Satisfied”) about the transition process from the DAEP back to the student’s campus and the cooperation/support from parents accepting transition services for their child (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Percentage of Responses to “How frequently did you provide the following services to the transition students in your caseload during the 2017-18 school year?”



Source: 2017-18 Transition Services Survey

Figure 5: Level of Satisfaction Regarding the Implementation of the Transition Services



Source: 2017-18 Transition Services Survey

Note: DAEP= Disciplinary Alternative Education Program.

Survey respondents (N=27) expressed numerous barriers they encountered concerning the implementation of the Transition Services program during the 2017-18 school year. Some of the more common barriers included the following:

- **Caseload:** too many cases; large assignments; prioritizing transition students with other referrals creates difficulty in maintaining adequate services to students (N=8);
- **Parent/family support/involvement:** resistance; getting consent for services; little communication with school (N=7);
- **Attendance/truancy:** re-enrolled students were often truant and made it difficult to provide services (N=5);

- **Lack of notification/communication:** regarding DAEP/JJAEP referrals and the reasons why students were referred; regarding students' re-enrollment on campus (N=7); and
- **Program awareness:** lack of understanding about the program; parents not informed/had no understanding of the Transition Services program before DAEP placement; lack of understanding of the PSS role in the transition process on campuses (N=4).

Respondents (N=24) also gave varied suggestions for improving the implementation of the Transition Services program that included:

- **Training:** Provide Transition Services program training to campus staff (administrators, counselors, and teachers), DAEP and PSS staff to effectively implement the program especially during the required initial meetings at the beginning of the school year (N=6).
- **Communication:** More/improve communication between school personnel and PSS. Have campuses provide a list of students referred to the DAEP/JJAEP and why (N=6).
- **Program awareness:** Provide informational fliers/emails to campus staff, and fliers to parents (N=2).
- **Process/procedures:** Review the Transition Services program process and procedures to determine and/or assess systemic successes and failures (i.e. what components are working well and what components are dysfunctional). Have campuses designate a staff member to take the lead on the transition process (difficult for PSS to do it when on campus one or two times a week) [N=2].

Summary

During the 2017-18 school year, the Transition Services program served transition students who had re-enrolled at their home school after returning from the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). The Transition Services program continued to experience problems in tracking students after exiting the DAEP. This and other challenges prevented transition students from receiving services. Few survey respondents (37%) were satisfied about the transition process from the DAEP back to the student's campus and 51.8 percent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the referral process of transition students to them by campus staff.

Data were not collected for students who had been released from the DAEP and re-enrolled to their home school and provided services through the Transition Services program. PSS had no way to access this information from their data collection system. A department data person will address the issue in 2018-19.

Recommendations

- **Consider the suggestions made by PSS staff for improving the implementation of the Transition Services program.** In its third year of implementation, the program continued to face the same challenges as before. Survey respondents expressed numerous barriers they encountered concerning the implementation of the Transition Services program during the 2017-18 school year. Overall, less than half of the respondents (48%) indicated that they agreed ("Agree"/"Strongly Agree") that the Transition Services was effective during the 2017-18 school year.
- **Create a data collection process for tracking transition students for the 2018-19 school year with assistance from the Program Evaluation Department to improve accountability of services provided.** The only impact PSS had on tracking students after their release from the DAEP was a list of the exited students sent as an email alert to PSS staff by the PSS clinician at the DAEP. No accounting for re-enrolled students served by Transition Services staff was in place.
- **Consider providing each student released from the DAEP an informational sheet/flyer listing the name and phone number of the PSS counselor at the student's home school and information about resources for student and family use.** The parent can be instructed to contact the counselor to inform him/her of the specific plan for their child returning to school or to inform the counselor what campus their child will enroll in if not returning to the home school.
- **Consider having a DAEP designee to contact the parent to follow-up on the status of child's re-enrollment to their home campus.** Transition services staff reported that some students did not re-enroll at the home campus in a timely manner. Staff also reported that some students did not ever return to the home campus because parents did not want them returning to the same environment.

An electronic version of this report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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