

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

The Rapides Parish School Board shall require that each public school make available to each student in grades three (3) through twelve (12) a mental health assessment by a licensed behavioral health provider, so long as it is annually authorized by his/her parent or legal guardian. Such screening shall be offered within the year, and, if feasible, during the first semester rather than the second semester of the school year. Each principal or his/her designee may use discretion in determining a convenient time for scheduling such assessments and an appropriate time and place to conduct such assessments.

For the purposes of this policy, "licensed behavioral health provider" means an individual or provider that falls into one of the following categories:

1. A mental health professional with a current and valid occupational license issued by a Louisiana professional occupational licensing board or commission under Title 37 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, acting within the scope of practice authorized by the licensing board to conduct mental health assessments.
2. A behavioral health services provider with a current and valid license issued by the Louisiana Department of Health pursuant to La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §40:2151 et seq. to provide mental health services and assessments.

The schools may locate a current list of licensed mental health professionals who are authorized to conduct mental health assessments by contacting the individual licensing boards who regulate the licensed professionals. Schools may locate a current list of behavioral health service providers licensed by the Louisiana Department of Health through the Louisiana Department of Health's website.

The assessments provided for in this policy shall be provided to the appropriate students at each public school at no cost to the School Board.

REFERRAL FOR ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

The Rapides Parish School Board recognizes that students with behavioral or emotional challenges may be at risk of their behavior escalating into aggression or disruption, disciplinary actions including suspension or expulsion, or juvenile delinquency. The School Board shall adopt and maintain rules and regulations for a program which assists school personnel to identify such signs and symptoms of a student with behavioral or emotional challenges.

A specific employee shall be designated at each school who shall be responsible for

identifying behavioral and mental health support services available in the community, and when appropriate, facilitating a referral of a student to those services for assessment and treatment, including services provided through the Louisiana Coordinated System of Care and its Medicaid provider network.

After any second suspension of a student during the same school year, the principal or his/her designee and the designated employee shall consult on whether the student's behavior could be attributable to behavioral or emotional challenges. If it is determined that the behavior is attributable to behavioral or emotional challenges and rises to the level that supportive services could be beneficial, the principal or his/her designee and the designated employee shall schedule a conference with the student's parent or legal guardian to discuss the student's behavior and counseling as well as the referral of the student and family to support services for assessment and treatment.

ANNUAL REPORT

The School Board shall report to the Louisiana Department of Education and the House and Senate committees on education the number of students identified as possibly having behavioral or emotional challenges, the number of students for which a conference was scheduled, and the number of students referred for assessment and supportive services. The reports shall be submitted annually on July first and shall reflect data from the previous school year.

MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

The Rapides School Board may offer mental health screenings for all students in grades kindergarten (K) through twelve (12) during the first semester of the school year. If the School Board approves and funds mental health screenings, each school under its jurisdiction shall comply with the provisions of this policy relative to the administration of such screenings.

The school shall notify the parent or legal guardian of each student that screenings are being offered and shall give the parent or legal guardian the option to consent in writing to the screening. A school shall not conduct a mental health screening on a student whose parent or legal guardian has not consented to the screening, unless the student has reached the age of majority or is an emancipated minor and independently consents in writing to the screening. The school shall identify the screening tool being used and include this information on the parental consent form with information on how to access the tool on the school or District's website.

If the results of a student's screening indicate a potential mental health condition, the school shall notify the student's parent, legal guardian, or the student if he has reached the age of majority or is an emancipated minor of the results and provide a list of resources available to the student in the school or community.

Results of the screenings shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure

except to the student's parent, legal guardian, or the student if he/she has reached the age of majority or is an emancipated minor. Within thirty (30) days following notification of the parent, legal guardian, or the student if he/she has reached the age of majority or is an emancipated minor, the mental health screening data collected by a school shall be destroyed. No school or vendor shall collect metadata when conducting such screenings.

The School Board shall not use the results of any mental health screening to make any decision relating to student instruction, academic opportunities, or discipline.

There shall be no cause of action against the School Board, or any employee thereof, related to the results of the screening.

New policy: July 2, 2024
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Ref: La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§17:173, 17:173.1, 17:416, 17:416.23, [17:416:24](#); Board minutes, 7-2-24, 9-2-25.