Support for All Students: Student Services Staff in K-12 Schools

All students have the option to meet with school counselors, psychologists, social workers and nurses in individual or group counseling sessions. Mental health services in the schools address barriers to access and promote good outcomes. Wisconsin does not collect statewide data on the number of sessions provided by the 4,455 student services staff.

Additional activities promoting positive mental health:
- Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports
- Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (S-BIRT)
- Trauma Sensitive Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>WI Ratio</th>
<th>Ideal Ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>• Provide counseling</td>
<td>458:1</td>
<td>250:1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide academic/career planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Consult with teachers/school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Psychologists</td>
<td>• Administer psychological assessments</td>
<td>979:1</td>
<td>600:1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support diverse learning/emotional needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement school-wide mental health policies/practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Nurses</td>
<td>• Connect families with community resources</td>
<td>1,832:1</td>
<td>750:1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Partner on treatment plans and assist in addressing mental health challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Social Worker</td>
<td>• Advocate for students and families</td>
<td>1,561:1</td>
<td>250:1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Consult with teachers/school staff</td>
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Counseling and Supports

Medicaid pays for many services delivered by community providers in the school setting.

In the 2015/16 school year, Medicaid changed regulations related to mental health clinics and independent clinicians providing outpatient mental health services in schools resulting in enhanced school/mental health clinic collaborations. Three times as many students were served by community providers integrated into schools in 2015 compared to two years earlier.

Key Findings

- School counselors, school nurses and school social workers are underrepresented in Wisconsin schools.
- Statewide school-based mental health services are not tracked.
- Three times as many students were served by community providers integrated into schools in 2015 compared to two years earlier.
- School-based mental health makes up a small percentage (<5%) of outpatient therapy and many counties have no schools offering these services (see Fact Sheet: Outpatient Mental Health Service Data for Children on Medicaid).
Mental Health Services in Schools (page 2)

Medicaid-Funded School-Based Services

Medicaid pays for assessment and counseling specifically for children with Individualized Education Plan (IEPs). Services are jointly paid for by federal Medicaid (60%) with the school or district paying the state Medicaid portion (40%), unlike other services where state funds are not used. Wisconsin pays $340,000 on average per year for these school-based services, a figure that has decreased since 2012.

A few school districts regularly use this funding mechanism, but most do not. The number of children receiving Medicaid reimbursed IEP services decreased from 2012 to 2015. Additional training for staff and school leadership could increase schools’ ability to use these funds to increase access to services.

Good News! School based mental health received $6 million for school mental health initiatives funding in the 2018-2019 Wisconsin budget.

Family and Youth Voice

While some parents and caregivers appreciate the convenience of mental health services in schools, others worry that school-based services will prevent them from being involved in planning and treatment. Some parents express frustration knowing that some schools offer mental health services while their children’s schools do not.

References

8. IBID. Includes outpatient mental health therapy in the location “School”. “Comprehensive Community Services” is a program for individuals needing ongoing mental health or substance use services. “Targeted Case Management” provides funding for services that assist in gaining access to services, including assessment and development of a care plan.