Policy & Practice
Lessons Learned from Constructing Mental Health Partnerships with High-Poverty High Schools

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Acknowledgments

Assessing a School, Justice and Behavioral Health Collaborative Approach to Improving School Safety

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LSU Health New Orleans

Child Health and Development Institute
Background

- Youth with behavioral health conditions, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, are vulnerable to suboptimal organizational designs & uncoordinated services among schools, behavioral health providers and law enforcement.

- Professionals are often underprepared to respond to behaviors that have trauma and mental health underpinnings.

- Failure to address these needs not only jeopardizes youth, but it can also impact others (e.g. school safety and climate can be compromised).

Presenting Challenge

- Identifying youth who are impacted by trauma, mental health conditions, and substance use.
- Developing appropriate responses to address needs in the school setting.
Collaboration & Capacity-Building Interventions

Adolescent Mental Health Training for School Resource Officers (AMHT-SRO):

A two-day training for school resource officers and school security, intended to build skills for appropriately responding to behaviors displayed by youth with mental health needs and those who have experienced trauma.

School Responder Model (SRM):

A cross-system response model involving schools, community behavioral health, and law enforcement that addresses school discipline through alternate routes, focusing on the core causes of the behavior. Intended to develop knowledge about trauma and mental health, and build collaboration across youth-serving systems.
Data and Methods

Mixed Methods
Quantitative Data Collection/Analysis (e.g. surveys, administrative data)
Qualitative Data Collection/Analysis (e.g. focus groups and interviews)

Quasi-Experimental Design
Group A: AMHT-SRO & SRM (4 schools)
Group B: SRM (4 schools)
Group C: AMHT-SRO (4 schools)
Schools Implementing the SRM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urbanicity</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Per Pupil Expenditures</th>
<th>Students: Counselor Ratio</th>
<th>Law Enforcement Referrals</th>
<th>Suspensions (Out-of-School) as % of enrollment</th>
<th>Expulsions as % of enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Suburban – Large</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>2,000-4,000</td>
<td>435:1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Suburban – Large</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>&lt;2,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>City – Small</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>2,000-4,000</td>
<td>285:1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Suburban – Large</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>2,000-4,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>City – Large</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>5,000-10,000</td>
<td>122:1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>City – Large</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>&lt;10,000</td>
<td>410:1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Suburban – Large</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>5,000-10,000</td>
<td>313:1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>City – Midsize</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>2,000-4,000</td>
<td>364:1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1%</td>
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# Demographics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2018 School Year</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>School 7</th>
<th>School 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>750-1,000</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
<td>&gt;1,000</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
<td>250-500</td>
<td>500-750</td>
<td>750-1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5-year change</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>&lt;25</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>&gt;75</td>
<td>&gt;75</td>
<td>&gt;75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5-year change</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>10-25</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>10-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5-year change</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-33</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5-year change</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>-46</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Econ Disadvantage</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>75-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5-year change</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
School Climate and Culture

**Strengths**

- Supportive and caring adult relationships for students.
- Clearly communicated rules about violence, abuse, harassment and bullying.

**Weaknesses**

- Physical and emotional safety.
- Quality of resources and physical surroundings.
- Leadership that creates and communicates a clear vision and is supportive of staff.
Each school implemented an alternative response system to disruptive student behavior in the 2018-2019 school year.

Response systems were developed by interdisciplinary teams.

Schoolwide trainings were completed on the trauma and mental health.
Implementation Challenges

1. Few Community-Based Champions with Strong Leadership Capabilities

2. Communicating the “Problem” Across Interdisciplinary Boundaries
3. Schools Struggling to Function as Organizations

4. Extent of Existing Collaboration and Partnerships

5. Developing a Permanent Supportive Structure
Use of partnerships to meet the unmet needs of young people with mental health conditions, and are at-risk of entering the justice, is a promising approach. Partnerships leverage existing resources in more efficient ways.

Doing partnership work with high-poverty schools that are struggling academically presents unique challenges:
- Not functioning optimally as organizations;
- Stuck in cycles of short-term thinking and “putting out fires.”

Work with these schools requires an approach that better responds to the realities of their work and environments.
#1 Construct Interdisciplinary Intermediary Team

#2 Incorporate Peer-to-Peer Learning Opportunities

#3 Mentor a Community-Based Intermediary Group
Contact Us

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