

Mental Health at Austin ISD

Addressing students' mental health needs can have a profound positive effect not only on the students receiving services, but also on those students who are not receiving services, and on teachers and school staff.

The Austin ISD Experience

Austin ISD receives \$2.4 million through the Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program 1115 Waiver program at 15 campus-based counseling referral centers. From August 2015 to date, 943 students, families and teachers have received behavioral health services through our partnership with Austin Travis County Integral Care.

In addition, the district committed \$480,000 in local funds to contract with a private provider, Vida Clinic, to offer services at three additional campuses, serving an additional 253 students and 41 teachers, bringing to 18 the number of campuses where mental health therapy is actively and intentionally provided.

Austin ISD and Vida Clinic developed and piloted a focused, trauma-informed intervention with small groups of high-risk parents in AISD schools, and reached 64 parents during the pilot phase, with 100 percent endorsing the intervention as useful and expressing a desire for more of this intervention.

At Crockett High School, the first campus to implement campus-based mental health services in 2012, the graduation rate has increased 14 percent (and is predicted to reach an increase of more than 22 percent next year); attendance has risen more than 5.5 percent; the annual dropout rate has dropped by 3.8 percent; and home suspensions—which numbered 749 in 2012—were reduced to 166 in 2014–15.

Address Student Needs Early

Reports indicate a need for counseling services as early as elementary school. These numbers reflect four of 10 categories

Mental Health-Related Cases, August 2014–June 2015

Cases	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Suicide Attempts	24	41	46
Suicide Ideation	383	486	586
Self-injurious Behavior	254	676	327
Filed Child Abuse/Neglect Reports	679	243	126

Source: Austin ISD Counselors

Crockett High School implemented campus-based mental health services in 2012. Since then,

Crockett's graduation rate has increased by **14 percent**,

the **annual dropout rate** has decreased by **3.8 percent** and

home suspensions dropped to **166 from 749**.

tracked by counselors from August 2014 through June 2015.

Investing in children early is crucial to provide students with the help they need to get and stay on the right track and succeed in school.

Bridging mental health with school indicators (attendance, discipline, and expulsions) has proven to be successful. Early investment also saves money in the long run, as the cost of incarceration and inpatient mental or behavioral care is far more costly.

Solutions

- Increase awareness and training for teachers to recognize trauma and mental health issues in children. This should include higher education curriculum for teachers.
- Invest mental health and criminal justice funding to support campus based mental health services.
- Require insurers to designate a school-based licensed clinical social worker, licensed professional counselor, psychological associate and psychologist described as in-network providers.