

# School-Linked Services (SLS) Government/State Agency Partner Facilitated Discussion Notes October 25, 2021

## Attendees

**Government/State Agency Partners:** Lenore Scott (DCF), Lee Fowler (DCF), Lisa Asare (DOH), Andrea Breitwieser (DHS), Natasha Johnson (DHS), Luiz Pereira (DOE), Valerie Mielke (DHS), Joelle Kenney (JJC), Mollie Greene (CSOC), Jennie Blakney (DOH)

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## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICES (SLS)?

- School-Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) offers non-stigmatizing services
  - Student does not need to be involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), a mental health diagnosis, low-income status, or receive Medicaid to attend
  - SBYSP provides a safety net for students not comfortable in social settings
  - Provides sex education and life skills to students
- Peers can refer other peers to SLS in addition to parents and teachers
- SLS complements existing school programs and increases the capacity of districts
- Structure has become confusing over the years, unclear what falls under SLS and how elements are connected (SBYSP vs. SLS structure, how Parent Linking Program [PLP] and Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative [APPI] fit into the structure)

## FUNDING SOURCES AND OUTCOMES

- Need to ensure there is an alignment between the intent of funding sources and how funding is being utilized
  - When utilizing multiple funding streams, there may be different rules for each, as well as different outcomes and standards expectations
- It is unclear if outcomes are meeting funding source needs and requirements. There is much variation among programs
- Must be a cross-agency agreement and whether agencies are meeting the needs of the funding source in order to maximize resources
  - Identify data points and whether the data is guiding the program model
  - Consider a needs assessment
- Maximize funding to better serve youth. Students in NJ need different things and must be flexible with the services provided
  - Consider whether the current funding structure is the right one moving forward
- Consider implementing an RFP process to ensure new ideas are being considered and to obtain the expected outcomes

## COLLABORATION WITH STATE AGENCY PARTNERS

- Leverage audience to address emerging issues to provide access of services to students
  - For example, Department of Health (DOH) COVID-19 vaccination efforts are currently directed at older youth. There is additional COVID-19 relief funding that can be allocated to school programs
- Consider the renewal of partnerships with APPI and PLP in a more structured/formalized manner to enhance service delivery
- Be aware that not all stakeholders and individuals involved will be happy with changes to SLS

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM CONTENT

- Consider standardizing SLS programs:
  - Implement evidence-based practices and promising models across schools
    - Can be a combination of how and what services are being delivered as evidence-based
    - Examine existing programs through a CQI approach, rather than creating a new program and determining whether it's evidence-based
      - Examine if existing program is culturally appropriate
    - DOH currently utilizes the CDC Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community (WSCC) model, Teen Prevention Education Program (PEP), etc.
- Ensure students have the foundation and core skills beyond what is learned in school, such as effective decision-making skills
- Consider providing services for students experiencing a behavioral health crisis but who do not require inpatient services, in order to reduce trauma to students and promote return to school following an emergency assessment
- Implement multi-tiered support service framework into schools
- Provide early intervention/prevention programs to prevent youth from entering specialty care system
- Provide resources to schools for diversion programs to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system
  - Implement restorative justice in schools
    - Bring providers into schools or coach staff through a "Train the Trainer" framework
    - Other areas in NJ are implementing youth courts which yielded promising results
- Provide education to school staff on the needs of LGBTQIA+ youth to support a safe and supportive school environment
  - Provide professional development to staff members in school districts