

Re-Engineering School-Linked Services

Stakeholder Convening #2

January 27, 2022

In Support of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), Office of School-Linked Services (OSLS)

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Re-Engineering SLS: Review and Progress to Date
- Environmental Scan Findings
- Preliminary Focus Group and Survey Findings and Recommendations
- Pair/Small Group Discussions
- Summary of Key Recommendations
- Questions and Next Steps



Welcome and Introductions

Center for Health Care Strategies

Dedicated to strengthening the U.S. health care system to ensure better, more equitable outcomes, particularly for people served by Medicaid.

Together with our partners, our work advances:



Effective models for prevention and care delivery that harness the field's best thinking and practices to meet critical needs.



Efficient solutions for policies and programs that extend the finite resources available to improve the delivery of vital services and ensure that payment is tied to value.



Equitable outcomes for people that improve the overall wellbeing of populations facing the greatest needs and health disparities.



Re-Engineering Process: Review and Progress to Date

Re-Engineering SLS: Review and Progress to Date

- In June 2021, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) engaged CHCS to develop a set of comprehensive recommendations for re-engineering School-Linked Services (SLS), informed by:
 - Stakeholder Kickoff Convening – August 2021
 - Environmental Scan – October 2021
 - Government Partner Discussion – October 2021
 - Focus Groups – still in progress as of January 2022
 - School Administrators
 - Providers
 - Youth (Middle and High School)
 - Parents and Caregivers
 - Stakeholder Convenings – series beginning in January 2022

Re-Engineering SLS: Review and Progress to Date

→ School Administrators

→ Goal of 10-20 responses

→ **Received 12 responses between November 15, 2021, and January 20, 2022, including:**

- Three focus groups with **four** participants total
- Eight survey responses
- Geographic breakdown:
 - Nine responses from South NJ (Cape May, Ocean and Gloucester counties)
 - Four responses from North NJ (Bergen and Passaic counties)

Re-Engineering SLS: Review and Progress to Date

- Providers

- Goal of 10-20 responses

- **Received eight responses between November 22, 2021, and January 20, 2022, including:**

- Two focus groups with **five** participants total
 - **Three** survey responses

- Geographic breakdown:

- Three responses from South NJ (Camden and Ocean county)
 - Three responses from North NJ (Passaic county)
 - Two responses from Central NJ (Middlesex and Mercer county)

Re-Engineering Process: Review and Progress to Date

- Parents and Caregivers
 - Goal of 10-20 responses
 - **Received three responses between January 12 and January 20, 2022, including:**
 - One individual discussion
 - One focus group with two participants
- Youth
 - Goal of 10-20 responses
 - Two individual discussions held since January 19, 2022
- Additional parent, caregiver and youth discussions will be held throughout January and early February until a sufficient number of individuals have been reached

Re-Engineering SLS: Barriers and Challenges

- Attaining DCF Research Review Committee approval prior to conducting focus groups with service recipients significantly delayed initiation of youth and family discussions.
 - Approval was granted in mid-December 2021, and groups are in process
- Competing priorities prevented many school administrators/providers from attending focus groups.
 - CHCS disseminated surveys to supplement focus group feedback
- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, along with associated school closings and staffing concerns may have a continued impact on scheduling.
 - CHCS is working with the Division of Family and Community Partnerships to address these concerns as they arise



Environmental Scan Findings

Overview of Environmental Scan

- Reviewed existing school-linked or co-located programs in New Jersey (in addition to SLS) and across the United States:
 - Academic Enrichment, Career Development, and Community Skill-Building
 - Mental Health and Substance Abuse
 - School-Based Health Centers
- Utilized clearinghouses (e.g., Blueprints for Youth Development) to identify evidence-based and promising practices that can be delivered in or connected to schools:
 - Academic Enrichment and Career Development
 - Mental Health and Substance Abuse
 - Overarching Models and Frameworks

Examples of NJ Programs

- **NJ Youth Corps**

- Combines academic instruction with community service, life skills, personal, and career counseling, and transition services to out-of-school youth ages 16-25 without a high school diploma.
- Corps members receive a stipend while enrolled in the program.

- **Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)**

- Facilitates effective transitions by youth to high-skill, high-wage employment in labor demand occupations with long-term career opportunities.

Examples of State and Local Programs

- **Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Center Program**
 - Removes non-academic barriers to learning
 - Currently implementing Strengthening Families framework
 - Has shown to reduce child maltreatment/family conflict, while enhancing family bonding, parental involvement, and positive parenting
 - Core Components:
 - Family Resource Centers
 - Youth Service Centers
 - Career Exploration and Development
 - Substance Abuse Education and Counseling
 - Family Crisis and Mental Health Counseling

Examples of State and Local Programs (continued)

- **Cornerstone Youth Programs**

- Partnership with New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and network of nonprofit providers across NYC.
- Assists youth in acquiring skills needed to graduate high school, succeed in their career, and give back to community
- Includes the following:
 - Academic support/tutoring
 - Life skills
 - Healthy eating
 - High school and college preparation
 - Career readiness
 - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs
 - Financial literacy
 - Creative/performance arts programs

Examples of Evidence-Based and Promising Practices: Academic Enrichment and Career Development

- **Career Academies**

- School-based, seeks to reduce drop-out rates and improve school performance, career readiness among high school youth
- Students work in “small learning communities” with same group of teachers for three or four years of high school
- Offers a combination of academic and career-technical curricula, integrated by a career theme
- Establishes partnerships with local employers and builds linkages with local colleges

Examples of Evidence-Based and Promising Practices: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- **Strengthening Families**

- Enhances family protective factors and resiliency to reduce mental/behavioral health challenges (i.e., substance abuse)
- Teaches conflict resolution, communication skills, and appropriate disciplinary measures to families, while promoting family engagement

- **Bounce Back**

- Parent education program teaching relaxation, cognitive re-structuring, emotional regulation/coping skills, and trauma-focused intervention strategies

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anger-Related Problems in Children and Adolescents**

- Can be implemented in elementary, middle, and high school
- Problem-focused, therapeutic approach to reduce aggression, anger, and improve self-control

Examples of Evidence-Based and Promising Practices: Overarching Models and Frameworks

- **Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)**
 - Shown to be highly effective in removing health-related barriers to promote academic success
 - Currently implemented in FL, NJ, PA, OK, CT, IN, KY, MS, VT
 - Components include:
 - Physical education/nutrition; health education/health services
 - Counseling, psychological, and social services
 - Employee wellness
 - Community involvement/family engagement

Examples of Evidence-Based and Promising Practices: Overarching Models and Frameworks (continued)

- **Positive Youth Development (PYD)**

- Prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, peer groups, and families
 - Recognizes the strengths of young people and promotes positive outcomes by fostering positive relationships
 - Can be integrated into a youth development program
 - Promotes adolescent sexual and reproductive health outcomes (such as prevention of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections)
 - Includes opportunities for youth leadership, skill building, and connections between youth/adults



Discussion of Environmental Scan Findings



Government Partner Discussion, Focus Group, and Survey Preliminary Findings

Government Partners

Government Partner Discussion

- On October 25, 2021, CHCS facilitated a discussion between the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and government agency partners connected to School-Linked Services, to reflect on **partners' idealized vision for SLS, and the impact of other agencies, programs, and associated requirements on the re-engineering process.**
- Representatives from the following state agencies and divisions participated in the conversation:
 - Department of Children and Families – Children's System of Care (CSOC)
 - Department of Health (DOH)
 - Department of Human Services (DHS) – Division of Family Development
 - Department of Education (DOE)
 - Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC)

Government Partner Recommendations

- The discussion centered around the following themes:
 - **Funding sources and outcomes**
 - Maximize funding to better serve youth and families
 - Ensure alignment between intent of funding sources and how funding is utilized
 - **State agency collaboration**
 - Consider renewal of DCF partnerships with other state agencies such as Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (APPI) and Parent Linking Programs (PLP) in a more formalized manner
 - **Program content and workforce development**
 - Standardize SLS programming
 - Examine existing programs via Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) approach
 - Implement multi-tiered support services, evidence-based and promising models in schools
 - Provide professional development to staff, including education on LGBTQIA+ youth needs

Focus Groups and Surveys

- Focus group and survey questions give participants the opportunity to share:
 - Observations of student and family needs or challenges
 - Recommendations for prevention programs and/or supportive services, both in and out of the school setting, to address those needs and promote overall student success
- Preliminary findings center around the following themes:
 - Student Challenges
 - Family Challenges
 - Programs and Program Components
 - Workforce Development
 - System Collaborations
 - Funding

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations – School Administrators

School Administrator Focus Group and Survey Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

- **Student Challenges:**

- Mental health/behavioral challenges are highly prevalent
- Physical fights and school violence currently prevalent

- **Family Challenges:**

- Relational issues between parents and children/youth
- Limited parent engagement with school and lack of understanding of value of education
- Financial difficulties:
 - Lack of or inconsistent employment
 - Inability to pay rent and utilities
- Lack of reliable transportation

School Administrator Focus Group and Survey Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (continued)

- **Programs and Program Components:**

- Vaping and substance abuse prevention workshops
- Trauma-informed counseling and family therapy in schools
- Education on emotional regulation and social skills
 - Establishment of wellness rooms in schools to enhance emotional regulation skills
- Parent education workshops
- Curriculum-based program targeting college and career readiness

School Administrator Focus Group and Survey Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (continued)

- **Workforce Development:**

- Enhance professional development, including cultural sensitivity and trauma-informed care training for staff

- **System Collaborations:**

- Build stronger partnerships between the DCF Division of Family and Community Partnerships, Division of Child Protection and Permanency, CSOC, DOE, and DOH

- Schools and community-based organizations must communicate with one another to be aware of other available community services

- **Funding:**

- Increase funding to hire additional mental health counselors, including linguistically diverse staff, to meet needs of students and families

- Co-locate a nurse practitioner and/or a health clinic in schools so students can access psychiatric services and medication

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations – Providers

Provider Focus Group and Survey Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

- **Student Challenges:**

- Limited social-emotional skills
- Difficulty managing behavior in the classroom
- Limited student engagement and poor school attendance
- Physical aggression, fighting, and gun violence threats in schools
- Financial difficulties and competing priorities – students assist families with rent and utility payments

- **Family Challenges:**

- Lack of affordable healthcare
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Relational issues between parents and children/youth
- High stress due to financial barriers, unemployment, food insecurity, and evictions
- Limited parenting skills and/or limited parent engagement in school or programs

Provider Focus Group and Survey Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (continued)

- **Programs and Program Components:**

- Provide peer mentorship programs for students
- Provide recreational/after-school activities to enhance student engagement
- Implement gang/violence prevention program for youth at-risk of involvement or youth currently involved in gangs
- Create substance abuse/vaping prevention program

- **Workforce Development:**

- Implement professional development for staff, including cultural humility training
- Provide competitive staff salaries to reduce high staff turnover

Provider Focus Group and Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (continued)

- **System Collaborations:**

- Build stronger partnerships between DCF, DOE, and DOL
- Build a streamlined process among students enrolled in SBYSP to automatically qualify for and receive public assistance (WIC, TANF, etc.)

- **Funding:**

- Additional funding to offer competitive salaries and fill counseling positions
- Additional funding to support professional development opportunities
- Provide rent/utility assistance for families



Questions and Answers



Pair/Small Group Discussions

Pair/Small Group Discussions



Pairs or small groups will explore the following areas of focus:

- Group 1 – Collaborations and Structures
- Group 2 – Program and Service Types
- Group 3 – Workforce Development and Training
- Group 4 – Evaluation and Reporting
- Group 5 – Funding

Question to consider:

- Given the environmental scan and focus group responses thus far, what would be the ideal scenario for your area of focus (e.g., for collaborations and structures, what agencies/partners should be working together, how, and to what end?)

Pair/Small Group Discussions

- Think, Pair, Share:
 - First, reflect on your own response to the question in the previous slide (5 minutes)
 - Next, share your reflections in your pair or small group (13 minutes)
 - Use the Jamboard pertaining to your group number to document ideas and recommendations using sticky notes
 - Lastly, pairs or small groups share their ideas and recommendations with the large group (13 minutes)



Discussion of Key Recommendations



Questions and Next Steps

Questions and Next Steps

- Next steps in re-engineering SLS project:
 - Additional youth and parent focus groups
 - Two subsequent stakeholder convenings
 - Youth and parent/caregiver insights at center of discussions and subsequent recommendations
 - Synthesis of findings
 - Vetting and developing final recommendations
 - Final recommendations anticipated in April 2022
- Questions
- Wrap-Up

Contact Information

- If you have any questions, please reach out to the CHCS team:
 - Stefanie Arbutina: spolacheck@chcs.org
 - Kamala Allen: kallen@chcs.org
 - Isabel Clemente: iclemente@chcs.org