Integrating Children’s Mental and Behavioral Healthcare into Schools to Promote Graduation

We disclose the absence of personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this educational activity within the past 12 months.

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Background

- Case study of 1 high school located in Mobile, Alabama
- The school serves 2,285 students in grades 9-12
- Minority enrollment is 73% of the student population with the majority of those students identifying as “black” (67% of student population)
- The graduation rate for the school’s district is 65%, lower than the 72% average for the state of Alabama
- While the student population has remained flat over the past 5 years, the teacher population has declined by 10% in the same time period (student:teacher ratio has gone from 16:1 to 18:1 during this time)
- 61% of students are eligible for Free Lunch; 4% of students are eligible for Reduced Lunch
- The year prior this school was devastated by a tornado
- Site: http://www.publischoolreview.com

Purpose

The purpose of the current project is to identify (predominantly) ninth grade students who are at-risk of dropping out of high school in order to intervene in a meaningful way and increase the retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, we are studying the common stressors identified by these at-risk high school students and the prevalence rates of depression and anxiety in this population in order to formulate possible intervention strategies for students.

Methods

- At-risk ninth graders are identified by having failing grades, multiple tardies/truancies, and/or behavioral problems which necessitate administrative intervention.
- A panel of teachers, administrators, school counselors, the school nurse, and the GCBHRC social worker were led by a Promotion Team Coach through discussions regarding students’ needs based on their referral to the Promotion Team.
- Those students identified as having behavioral problems in addition to their academic problems were referred to the social worker for screening and possible services.
- Additionally, an opportunity sample was taken of the Promotion Team-identified students during Report Card Conferences.

Overall Model

Counseling Services

Family/Community

Coordinated School Health

Health Services

Physical Education

Nutrition

Health Education

Behavioral Health Triage

- No Risk
- Two Minute Academic Motivational Interview
- Moderate Risk
- Repetitive Five Minute Contact: Motivational Interview
- Severe Risk
- Referral and/or Crisis Services

- While 67% of student population is black, 91% of the students identified for our services were black. This indicates a disparity in Promotion Team involvement.
- Greater than 10% of the Black youth endorsed significant levels of depression and/or anxiety.
- Three most common stressors endorsed by these youth were:
  - Prob. w/ schoolwork/assignments/grades (77%)
  - Death or illness of close friend/family member (23%)
  - Loss or separation from a loved one (8%)

Results

Black Students Referred to Promotion Team with Depression and/or Anxiety 5x (PHQ9 and/or GAD7 Scores ≥ 10)

- Depression (male n=34, female n=49)
- Anxiety (male n=34, female n=33)