

Alexander Local Wraparound Services

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Albany, OH Athens County

Initiative Type(s):

Mental health services, Services for homeless youth, Services for child welfare involved youth, Community liaisons, Physical health care services, Mentoring programs, Family engagement and support services, Professional development regarding the provision of trauma-informed care, Student services provided prior to or after the regularly scheduled school day or any time school is not in session

Community Partner(s):

Board of alcohol drug and mental health services, Educational service center, County board of developmental disabilities, Community-based mental treatment provider, County department of job and family services, Nonprofit organization with experience serving children, Public hospital agency.

Description of Initiative:

Alexander Local Schools provides wraparound services, including mental health counseling and health care services, in the district to ensure students' basic needs are met so they can focus and do well in school. Alexander Local Schools utilizes and houses Athens County Children Services, Hopewell Health Centers, Health Recovery Services, a Holzer clinic and Officer Childs of the Athens County Sheriff's Office. Partners provide services year-round, during the day, in the evenings and after school, and at sporting events. Their presence allows for the immediate support, evaluation and intervention for students and families when a child is struggling or begins to fall apart.

Initiative Benefits:

Alexander Local Schools, located in Athens County, is a rural, Appalachian district. Unemployment, poverty and drug addiction affect many families in the district. As superintendent, I became aware of the number of children who needed medical or counseling services but were not receiving the proper care. In many cases, it appeared that parents were not following through with planned appointments, if they could even get appointments. Athens County also is designated a Low-Income Health Professional Shortage Area by the Health Resources and Services Administration, with area shortages in mental health and dental health professionals. Even when families recognized the need for these services, missed school, time away from work and the cost of transportation were persistent barriers to accessing care. Partnering with and housing these service agencies in the district allows them to provide services to nearly 1,500 students right on campus, removing major barriers. The services provided have become a crucial part of our school culture. The most significant improvements have been increased attendance (with fewer tardies) and graduation rates (remaining above 95%), reduced behavioral issues and increased academic success. These services allow for consistent academic growth, preparing the whole child for success.

Essential Staff and Partners:

Essential partners include our district administration, support staff and teachers. Additionally, the school counselors and community liaisons make this work possible. Many community partner agencies contribute to this work, including Athens County Children Services, Hopewell Health Centers, Health Recovery Services, Holzer Health System, Family Children First Counsel and local law enforcement.

Action Steps to Get Started:

We held meetings with various agencies to discuss possible relationships (our work began as a one-year pilot program with one counselor from Hopewell Health Centers); set goals to meet the biggest needs of our student population; and created an administrative team to move the district forward in the process (including nurses, counselors, truancy officers and partner agencies).

For More Information:

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NOTE: Student Wellness and Success Funds were not used for this initiative.