

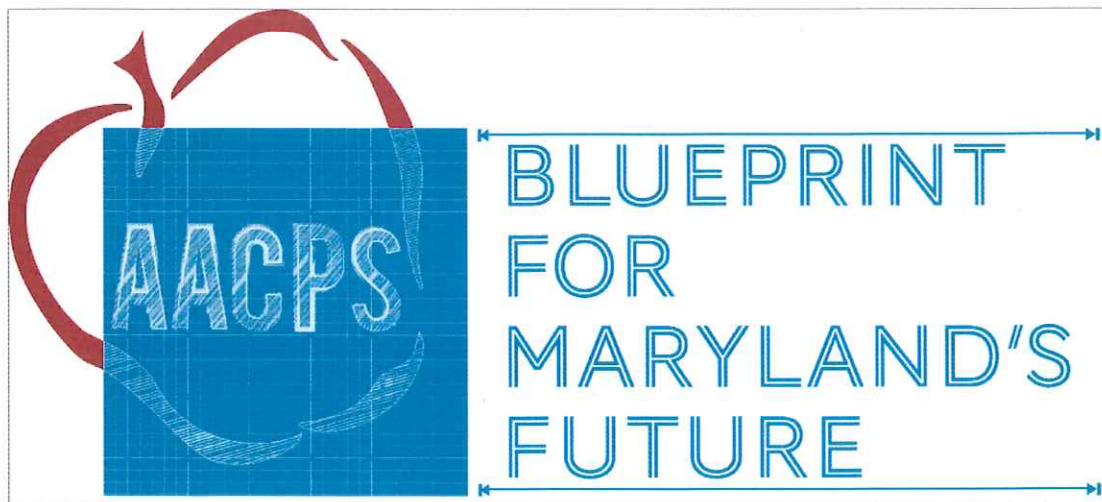
# **HB1372**

## **Enhancing and Expanding School- Based Behavioral Health Services**

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MSAR# 13730**

Submitted: October 31, 2022



**Accountability and Implementation Board Report on Enhancing and Expanding School-Based  
Behavioral Health Services**

November 1, 2022

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

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## Introduction

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is a large school system with 128 schools and more than 85,000 students. Students in AACPS come from a broad range of communities, and like students nationally, many AACPS students have mental health needs. AACPS partnered with key community groups and local health agencies to address these needs. Together we created a comprehensive program of support for our students and our communities that requires a comprehensive professional development and training plan for our district's employees to best meet our students' needs.

## AACPS Student Services Supports

The foundation of our AACPS School Based Behavioral Health Services Plan is the training and services provided to our Student Services staff. The mission of Student Services is to support students in overcoming barriers to achieve school success. The AACPS Student Services staff work as teams to address various issues, including suicide prevention, trauma-sensitive care, behavioral threat assessment, homelessness, chronic absenteeism, social-emotional learning, truancy, bullying, substance use, trauma response, and chronic health conditions. The Department of Student Services in Anne Arundel County Public Schools and the 2022 – 2023 school-based staffing in each office are reflected in the table below.

School Counseling	106.5	Elementary School Counselors
	73.5	Middle School Counselors
	89	High School Counselors
	2	International Welcome Center Counselors
Psychological Services	93	School Psychologists
School Social Work	53	School Social Workers
Pupil Personnel	36	Pupil Personnel Workers

Each school in AACPS has at least one half-time school nurse. School nurses work under the direction of the Anne Arundel County Health Department (AACHD). This relationship ensures that student health needs are addressed and supported inside and outside our schools.

Below, please find a list of Student Services staff positions and how these positions support School Based Behavioral Health needs.

- **School counselors** are a universal support and have a specialized knowledge of curriculum and instruction. They design and implement comprehensive programs to build fundamental

academic and social skills. They also prepare all students for successful transitions from school to college and careers.

- **School psychologists** administer, analyze, and interpret psychological assessments, select and implement appropriate evidence-based, specialized interventions, and promote success for targeted students.
- **School social workers** provide individual, group, and family mental health services. They also understand school, family, and community systems. They can link students and families with appropriate community services and facilitate services for targeted students.
- **Pupil personnel workers** are trained to assess student needs, serve as student advocates, and act as a motivating force in removing barriers to student achievement. They inform families and schools about rules, regulations, policies, and procedures. They uphold school laws, AACPS policies, and regulations while providing strategies to empower families to access community resources effectively.
- **School health nurses** understand the basic health needs of students. They treat health issues and support parents in accessing health resources.

### **AACPS Expanded School-Based Mental Health Program**

Since 2006, AACPS has had a program called **Expanded School-Based Mental Health (ESBMH)**. This program is a partnership between AACPS and five clinical mental health agencies with contracts with AACPS. This collaboration allows these five agencies to conduct individual, group, and family therapy in school buildings for those students who qualify. The program is intended to break down barriers, such as transportation and scheduling, for those students and families who need more intensive mental health services than the AACPS student services staff can provide.

The five agencies that make up this partnership are:

- Children's Guild
- Villa Maria
- Thrive Behavioral Health
- Innovative Therapeutic Services
- TIME (new in 2022 – 2023)



These agencies accept Medicaid, and many have expanded their paneling to allow them to accept various private insurance. Through grant funding, AACPS has designated funding to allow these agencies to bill AACPS for students who do not currently have insurance and families who have private insurance and cannot afford their copays. These services have allowed many students and families to take advantage of this service without any barriers.

This program is in more than one hundred and ten AACPS schools. Only one agency works in each school, allowing the partner agencies to have collaborative relationships, as they are not competing for referrals within the same school. This structure also makes it more manageable for AACPS to support the partnership.

In a 2021-22 end-of-year report on the ESBMH program, four agencies serviced approximately 1,354 students during the school year. TIME became a partner during the 2022-23 school year. Of the four ESBMH provider partners, The Children's Guild served the most students in this summary. The Children's Guild provided more individual sessions on average (16.21), whereas Thrive provided more sessions on average in a group (13.57) or family (2.41) format. Overall, ADHD (21.20%) and Trauma (13.44%) are the most frequent primary diagnosis for ESBMH students. Nearly half (48.45%) of students served by ESBMH providers were in elementary school. Grade 5 (n=120) has the most students served at 8.86% of the population. More than three-quarters of students with identifiers (75.16%) qualify for free and reduced lunch (FARMS).

The ESBMH program has been a crucial support and partnership for AACPS. Student services staff rely on this service for students and families with barriers to accessing a clinic outside the school for mental health support.

### **Anne Arundel County Crisis Response System**

The Anne Arundel County Crisis Response System (CRS), known as the "Community Warmline" or "Mobile Crisis," is a service that provides Anne Arundel County Residents in crisis with supportive assistance and linkages to resources within the community.

The "Community Warmline" can receive calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Non-emergency calls are handled by staff, and will provide the caller with information, support, and referrals. The Crisis Response

System Staff intervenes with callers experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorder emergencies. Also, the Crisis Response System "Community Warmline" coordinates calls with the police, fire, and community agencies requesting information on crisis matters.

AACPS relies on CRS to support students and families in crisis and/or need to be linked to services. AACPS and CRS work closely and have maintained an excellent partnership. There are three reasons why an AACPS staff member may call the CRS to support a student. This may include a situation in which a student makes a suicidal statement, gesture, and/or attempt and has gone beyond the support the student services team can provide at the school. This may also include a situation in which a student makes a threat of harm against another student or staff member. The most common reason AACPS staff reaches out to CRS is when a student engages in extremely unsafe physical behaviors and does not respond to interventions.

CRS works with the family to connect them with outside resources unavailable in the school. They are also able to make decisions on doing an emergency petition for those students who require hospitalization. The relationship between AACPS and CRS is essential in ensuring that students and families have the available mental and behavioral health support necessary to thrive.

### **Tier I Social-Emotional, Mental Health, and Behavioral Health Supports**

AACPS believes that a key component of School Based Behavior Health is to support our staff's social, emotional, and mental health needs. As a result, AACPS provides opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in meaningful professional learning that supports adult and student needs.

AACPS requires all faculty and staff who work with students to complete professional development in various aspects of School Based Behavioral Health. These supports include professional development opportunities designed to assist teachers in creating positive classroom environments, understanding, and implementing social-emotional learning strategies, and using the district curriculum. In addition, other topics include how to use classroom interventions to enhance college and career development, increasing attendance, and learning about specific mental health topics.

## Second Step Adult Social-Emotional Learning for AACPS Staff

AACPS offers the **Second Step Adult Social-Emotional Learning** training for all staff. Second Step is an opportunity for staff to earn APC credits and stipends for their participation in the course. The modules include Building Trust, Managing Stress, Equity and Belonging, and Resilience and Efficacy.

The Second Step Adult Social-Emotional training is a professional learning program designed to support educator well-being and a positive school climate by providing the skills, knowledge, and resources educators need to thrive in the work environment. It supports teacher well-being in creating a positive school climate and empowers every adult in a school with the skills to create a positive learning environment. It also supports school leaders in creating structures, expectations, and norms that support teacher well-being. The leader track provides a variety of supports, from forming a team to implementing the program to facilitating module kickoffs. Leaders also experience the program's contents alongside staff, with additional content about ways to support staff and successfully implement the program.

## Core School Counseling Curriculum for AACPS Students

AACPS school counselors teach a core curriculum of classroom lessons throughout the school year. This curriculum aligns with the American School Counseling Association's domains of academic development, social-emotional development, and college and career development. The high school counselors deliver content through Naviance, an electronic college and career platform. Through this platform, students learn about different careers and colleges and pathways to either get into a college or university or start a career. The topics that school counselors address are found in the chart below.

Elementary School	Middle School	High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• healthy relationships</li><li>• responsible decision-making</li><li>• personal safety</li><li>• college and careers</li><li>• substance use prevention</li><li>• internet safety</li><li>• self-regulation and calming strategies</li><li>• bullying prevention</li><li>• goal setting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• transition to middle school</li><li>• calming strategies</li><li>• goal setting</li><li>• healthy relationships</li><li>• academic skills</li><li>• social media</li><li>• interest and strength inventories</li><li>• post-secondary awareness</li><li>• effort and persistence</li><li>• diversity and equity</li><li>• positive self-concept</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to use the skills developed in elementary and middle school to have a positive high school experience and prepare for lifelong social, emotional, behavioral, academic, and community success</li><li>• college and career exploration and planning</li></ul>



## Social-Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL) Training

**Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL)** is focused on promoting young children's social-emotional development and school readiness from birth to age five. SEFEL is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country. ECI, Pre-K, and Kindergarten teachers continued to receive SEFEL training to support young children's social and emotional foundations as they transitioned back to school after the pandemic.

## Second Step Programs

In addition to SEFEL, AACPS provides various programs and activities that support students through the **Second Step**. Second Step is used as the Tier I SEL curriculum is offered at various levels and includes the following.

Program	Grade(s) & Frequency	Main Foci
<i>Second Step Early Learning Social – Emotional Curriculum</i>	Pre-Kindergarten <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1-2 times per week during Community Wellness Block</li></ul>	Five units cover skills for learning, empathy, emotional management, friendship skills, problem-solving, and transitioning to kindergarten.
<i>Second Step K-5 Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum</i>	Kindergarten – Grade 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1-2 times per week during Community Wellness Block</li></ul>	Four units cover growth mindset and goal-setting, emotion management, empathy and kindness, and problem solving.  Lessons allow teachers to include real-life scenarios that keep the program content relevant for their students.
<i>Second Step 6-8 Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum</i>	Grades 6 – 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1-2 times per week during Advisory</li></ul>	Four units cover mindsets and goals, recognizing bullying and harassment, thoughts, emotions, and decisions, and managing relationships and social conflict.

## High School Community Wellness Curriculum

All AACPS high schools implement the High School Community Wellness curriculum one time per week during their Community Wellness block. Through grant funding from the US Department of Education, we collaborated with Johns Hopkins University and the University of Virginia to develop and release student social-emotional learning and wellness content for all high schools with all grades. The collaborative releases weekly sessions that each school accesses. These sessions have been developed into a scope and sequence to be implemented by the high schools.



The lessons help advisory teachers build the social-emotional learning (SEL) of their students, promote a better sense of community, and respond to students positively and in a way that is centered on relationships. The student wellness content blends the five core competencies (i.e., social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and self-management) of SEL outlined by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning).

Community-building activities, like community-building circles, are meant to build community, promote positive relationships, and serve as a suitable time to practice SEL and wellness skills taught during student wellness sessions. In partnership with researchers, a few identified schools have gained the opportunity to shape implementation supports that can be developed and offered (e.g., professional development and ongoing coaching for schools) and build an infrastructure for student leadership to promote wellness.

### **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Training**

AACPS provides training and ongoing coaching support to all schools as they develop and maintain a Multi-Tiered System of Support and increase their use of Restorative Practices. The specific training starts with Tier 1 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which provides the framework to support Restorative Practices. AACPS is building the internal capacity to enhance and improve the schools' integration of universal positive behavior supports and social-emotional learning, to develop restorative community-building and responses to behavioral concerns.

Teachers also receive professional development and ongoing support to select, implement and evaluate evidence-based practices. The focus is on internal district capacity building to provide streamlined yet tailored support to the schools. Restorative Approaches include PBIS, Restorative Circles, and Social Emotional Learning.

### **Documentary Screenings with Curriculum for Advisory**

AACPS students, staff, and families have had the opportunity to engage in quarterly screenings of the documentaries "Angst," "Like," "Screenagers," and "Upstanders." Middle and high school students watched these films during their advisory class and then engaged in the curriculum around the topics. There was also a community screening for families to watch the evening films. Engaging the Anne Arundel County community in viewing and discussing documentaries around these topics has helped to

overcome the stigma of mental health and has allowed parents and guardians to have conversations with their children about these difficult topics.

- *Angst* is a documentary designed to raise awareness about anxiety. Angst removes the stigma and opens the conversation around anxiety, helping people understand and manage their symptoms and when to reach out for help. Most importantly, it shows people they are not alone, and that anxiety is 100% treatable.
- *LIKE* is a documentary to help us find a balance between our virtual and real lives. LIKE explores the impact of social media on our lives and the effects of technology on the brain. Understanding that virtual connection is not going away and has many benefits, its goal is to inform, educate and inspire people of all ages to self-regulate, so they can enjoy balanced and fulfilled lives.
- *Screenagers* is an award-winning film that explores the vulnerable corners of family life and depicts messy struggles over social media, video games, and academics. The film offers solutions on how we can help our kids navigate the digital world.
- *The Upstanders* is a documentary about resilience and the power of connection to end bullying. The Upstanders explores all sides of cyberbullying, from the bully to the victim, bystanders, and family members. Social media's power means that bullying is now a 24/7 phenomenon, where even changing schools and phone numbers or deleting accounts cannot stop the cycle. Covid has increased the incidence of cyberbullying by 70%. Changing human behavior and connection is the key, and this is what the film addresses.

### College and Career Supports

Some students experience increased stress and anxiety when considering and planning their future. One way that AACPS helps students cope with goal setting and planning is through College and Career support. AACPS School Counselors teach a variety of college and career lessons. Using both **Xello** (an interactive college and career exploration platform for elementary students) and **Naviance** (an interactive college and career exploration and planning platform for secondary students), students develop important goal-setting skills that help prepare them for secondary and post-secondary success.

Naviance for Middle School is a college and career readiness solution that helps students discover during these pivotal years their strengths and interests and see how they can help them reach their goals. It also enables individual learning plans aligned with students' goals. The use of Naviance for Middle

School allows all middle school students to have the opportunity to engage in career and college exploration at an early age. This supports them as they move on to high school and start determining their post-secondary path. Students will continue using Naviance as they enter high school and prepare for college and career opportunities.

Students continue using Naviance at the high school level, where Naviance becomes a primary tool in high school course selection planning, career development, college preparation, and college and scholarship application processes.

In addition, to support through Naviance, each of the thirteen comprehensive high schools has hired a College and Career Advisor to support high school students in researching colleges and career paths, writing college essays, touring job sites in Anne Arundel County, and taking field trips to colleges in Maryland. This staff member supports the school counselor in teaching Naviance lessons about choosing a college and career path.

### **MOI for Attendance Initiatives**

Attendance is a major component of student academic and SEL success. AACPS has provided materials of instruction funding that are being used for schools to develop attendance interventions and supports. As a result of the pandemic, the rate of students who were chronically absent has increased significantly. Schools have started to create universal programs to promote school attendance. They have started thinking of new ways to provide targeted interventions for those students who are close to being chronically absent. Pupil personnel workers are also using these funds to think outside of the box in providing intensive interventions for those students who have been chronically absent.

### **Tier II Social-Emotional, Mental Health, and Behavioral Health Supports**

AACPS has put in place a variety of secondary supports that some AACPS staff and students can experience. These supports include summer, additional student services, college, career advisor staffing, mental health awareness training, mindfulness, trauma-informed supports, recess assistance, structures to address chronic attendance, equity literacy, mentoring, and mental health clubs. Some of these programs are highlighted below.



### **Social-Emotional Learning Summer Enhancement Program**

Starting in the 2020-21 school year, the Office of School Counseling and the Office of School Social Work has offered a social and emotional learning (SEL) summer enhancement program in collaboration with the AACPS elementary summer programs. The expansion of summer programs to include the SEL curriculum has provided additional support to students as they have all, to some degree, been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The SEL, summer enhancement program assists students in rebuilding conditions of success for students who may be disconnected and disengaged due to mental stress caused by the pandemic.

### **Contract Staffing Support for School Psychologists**

As students continue to recover from the pandemic, many students have exhibited mental health and behavioral challenges. This need goes beyond the capacity of the Student Services staff AACPS currently has in their school buildings. For that reason, we are currently hiring contract school psychologists to fill in the needs of schools requiring additional support. This funding will also cover the cost of additional psychological assessments, so these individuals can also support the special education process.

### **Mental Health Awareness for AACPS Staff and Students**

AACPS has implemented a countywide plan to provide mental health awareness and reduce mental health stigma amongst staff. This project has focused on a systematic way to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid Training for Anne Arundel County Public School staff. Approximately thirty AACPS student services staff have been trained as master Youth Mental Health First Aid trainers and are providing training to AACPS staff. The Youth Mental Health First Aid course is intended for adults to learn how to help young people experiencing mental health challenges or crises. It reviews the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents ages 12-18 and emphasizes the importance of early intervention. This training helps individuals identify, understand, and respond to signs of addiction and mental illnesses. Participants learn the risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, information on depression, anxiety, Trauma, psychosis, and addiction disorders, a 5-step action plan to help someone developing a mental health problem or crisis, and where to turn for help.

### Trauma Training for AACPS Staff

AACPS currently provides training to staff in the ACE Interface Trauma Training from The Family Tree. This project's initial component was to get trauma trained fifteen Anne Arundel County Public Schools Student Services staff. The next component of the grant project has been to train AACPS staff by providing them with APC credit and stipends. The last component of this project will be to train AACPS parents/guardians. As AACPS staff and parents/guardians become trained in trauma awareness, they will be able to better support students and their children in developing and building resilience.

### R-CITY

Ten AACPS elementary and middle schools have been participating in a project called R-CITY, which focuses on equity literacy. The schools in the project have been implementing Second Step for at least one year and Tier 1 PBIS/MTSS for at least three years.

R-CITY is a collaborative teacher & youth-focused prevention intervention that offers a unit of 6 equity literacy lessons to accompany the Second Step social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. The lessons are designed to build teachers' and students' "equity stamina" and promote SEL skills to create safe and positive learning environments for all.

R-CITY refers to Collaborative Intervention with Teachers and Youth to practice and apply the 4 "Rs" of equity literacy skills in the classroom – Recognizing, Responding, Restoring Relationships, and Resilience. This approach was developed to reinforce the equity literacy model utilized by the AACPS Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement (OEASA). This project extends an ongoing partnership between AACPS, the University of Virginia, and Johns Hopkins University.

### Outdoor Wellness Spaces

AACPS is in the process of implementing a needed enhancement to our school portfolio of tools to address the social-emotional and academic needs of our students. The outdoors is that tool. Students who engage in outdoor experiences have boosted confidence, indicate a higher interest in school, and have improved scores on critical thinking and cognitive achievement tests. Studies have shown that having more green spaces on school grounds can reduce stress, help students focus, and regulate behavior. Utilizing the green spaces for instruction has shown higher academic, enhanced attitudes and engagement with school, supporting creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Exposure to

outdoor natural environments also increases awareness of local flora and fauna, and students are more aware of their impact on the environment, building citizen stewards to care for our environment.

AACPS looks to create outdoor wellness spaces at ten schools by the end of the 2023-24 school year. Student services staff have been trained on how to use these spaces to support the social-emotional well-being of students through a variety of therapeutic interventions.

### **Mental Health Clubs**

AACPS has partnered with the Notre Dame University of Maryland to create the Student Alliance for Flourishing club in four high schools and four middle schools. The club's main mission is to overcome mental health stigma and build positive mental wellness in the schools. They use the flourishing standards framework through Harvard University and help in promoting positive mental health and breaking down mental health stigma. After receiving explicit learning on the flourishing standards, students work with their AACPS advisor to understand how they can flourish individually, flourish within their own community, and flourish globally. They will work on projects to accomplish these goals. The Notre Dame University of Maryland provides the curriculum/materials used to teach the flourishing standards, training for AACPS advisors on how to run the clubs, speakers invited to talk to the students, and guidance for the schools as they implement the program.

### **Playworks**

AACPS currently has a partnership with Playworks, a national non-profit organization that helps kids to stay active and build valuable life skills through play. Playworks is supporting five elementary schools in reimagining recess. These schools include Quarterfield E.S., Glen Burnie Park E.S., Mills-Parole E.S., Overlook ES, and Van Bokkelen E.S.

For 25 years, Playworks has helped schools figure out what works well on their playgrounds. For recess to reinforce school culture, they have learned that a holistic approach is needed. Their initiatives focus on safety, engagement, and empowerment.

The five schools receive the "Power of Play" and "Proactive Group Management Training." Topics include the benefits of safe and healthy play, social distancing appropriate games, playful conflict resolution strategies, brain breaks, and developing social and emotional skills through play.



The five schools will also engage in the "Recess Reboot Series," a four-day consultation visit with a Playworks trainer on-site to build capacity amongst recess teams, observe and consult on play and recess systems, and model and model and implement best practices. This program also includes one on one Class Game Time with each class, as well as support to launch a Junior Coach Leadership program for the fourth and fifth-grade students.

### **Attendance Works Community of Practice**

This initiative has allowed AACPS to contract with Attendance Works, a nationally recognized organization for research-based approaches to improving attendance. This included support for four clusters of AACPS schools over three years. Attendance Works provides five "Community of Practice" trainings for the administrators and Student Services teams in these clusters. These trainings focus on the barriers to attendance in their school communities, research-based Tier I, II, and III attendance interventions, and the development of school structures to analyze attendance data and make data-driven decisions. In between the "Community of Practice" trainings, Attendance Works provides individual coaching to principals in implementing interventions and structures to support positive attendance and school engagement. The four identified clusters for this initiative are the Meade, Annapolis, North County, and Glen Burnie clusters of schools.

### **Rites of Passage Mentoring Program**

The Center for Research and Mentoring of Black Male Students and Teachers at Bowie State University (BSU) has engaged in a two-year Black Boys Rites of Passage (BBRP) Program for 25-30 seventh-eighth-grade Black male students at Annapolis Middle School. The program has identified Black male students with diverse academic achievement, social standing, and economic profiles. The BBRP program utilizes a hybrid model with in-person sessions at BSU and virtual sessions on Zoom. Black male students participate in sessions, programs, activities, and field trips. Most sessions and activities occur on Saturdays during the academic year and include a summer experience. Several special programs or activities are held during the weekday evenings to provide students with unique experiences. At the end of each quarter/semester, the BBRP program hosts an awards program for students, families, and the community.

### Mindfulness Teacher Training

AACPS teachers have had the opportunity to engage in mindfulness trainings and learn mindfulness skills they can incorporate into their teaching through Mindful Schools. AACPS offers Mindfulness 101: Mindfulness Foundations and Mindfulness 201: Mindfulness in Schools. Research has shown many benefits of mindfulness for children. Studies show that the benefits of mindfulness for children may include increased focus, attention, self-control, classroom participation, and compassion. Mindfulness strategies have also demonstrated improved academic performance, the ability to resolve conflict, improvement in overall well-being, and decreased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and disruptive behavior. The pandemic has caused stressors for many children, and mindfulness strategies have allowed them to have improved coping strategies.

### Tier III Social-Emotional, Mental Health, and Behavioral Health Supports

AACPS has put into place a variety of targeted supports that a few AACPS staff and students can experience. These supports include mental health support for uninsured students, substance use treatment, behavior crisis support, and threat assessment technology. These programs are highlighted below.

Program	Description
Expanded School-Based Mental Health Services for Uninsured Children and Families	AACPS has utilized grant funds to support students who do not currently have access to the Expanded School-Based Mental Health program. Students who do not have Medicaid or private health insurance or have a gap in health insurance are now eligible to receive school-based mental health services through grant funds. This program will allow these students and families to have mental health and social-emotional support to develop social stability within their families. This program is working to level the playing field for mental health access in Anne Arundel County.
Substance Use Prevention and Intervention Team	Student Services has created the "Substance Use Prevention and Intervention Team" to support schools around the issue of substance use prevention. This is a partnership with Thrive Behavioral Health, and the team is comprised of two licensed mental health and addictions clinicians who come to the schools to screen, assess, intervene, and refer students who are at risk of substance use or abuse. They are also available to provide psychoeducation in groups or at a table at lunch with materials and the opportunity to ask questions. In addition to direct counseling for students and families and referrals to outside agencies, this team is available to provide professional development for staff and lessons in the classroom on the topic of substance use prevention. This team is available to all schools in AACPS, including elementary schools.
STAR (Screening Teens Access to Recovery)	This initiative provides voluntary substance abuse screening for middle and high school students. Students who are seeking help with substance use issues now have another place to turn, thanks to a partnership between the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, Thrive Behavioral Health, and AACPS. The STAR (Screening Teens to Access Recovery) program allows school health nurses to utilize technology to connect middle and high school students in a tele-session with a licensed therapist from the Anne Arundel County Department of Health or Thrive Behavioral Health. Sessions take place



	through a secure portal to ensure privacy. Based on screening results, the therapist will work with the student to explore available treatment options and decide the next steps. The therapist and school health nurse will encourage students to include their parents, guardians, caregivers, or another trusted adult in the process.
Central Office Crisis Behavioral Support Team	The Central Office Crisis Behavioral Support Team exists as a support team for schools when students engage in challenging behaviors in the school building. The team supports the school when they have exhausted their resources in supporting students and are still struggling to bring stability to the student's behavior. This can sometimes lead to the entire school being in crisis. The Central Office Crisis Behavioral Support Team works with a school to brainstorm solutions to stabilize the student's behavior and help the school get out of crisis. The Central Office Crisis Behavioral Support Team has funding for temporary teaching assistants to assist with behaviors. This program provides the school with sensory items to use in the sensory room or calm-down corners in the classroom.
Thrive Behavioral Health Expanded Childhood Behavioral Intervention (ECBI) Program	<p>AACPS currently operates the Expanded Childhood Behavioral Intervention (ECBI) program in partnership with Thrive Behavioral Health. Expanded Childhood Behavior Intervention (ECBI) aims to maintain students enrolled in their current school setting who exhibit behavioral challenges. ECBI incorporates short-term intensive therapy with positive behavioral supports in the school setting and provides modeling of interventions in the student's home. These services are provided to increase the acquisition of social skills and emotional regulation strategies by working directly with the student, school teams, and families in their natural environment. ECBI services are provided through a collaboration with Thrive Behavioral Health and Anne Arundel County Public Schools.</p> <p>A behavioral therapist and a therapist assistant team work directly in the home and school to promote behavior skill acquisition. The therapist team supports the school for up to 4 hours a week and the home for up to 3 hours a week. Direct observations and recommendations are provided to support the child. The recommended strategies will be modeled to support the school and family in implementing the strategies with the student.</p>
Behavioral Threat Assessment System (BTAS)	<p>AACPS has developed a comprehensive threat assessment process aligned with best practices identified by the United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (USSS NTAC) and the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines (VSTAG). However, the previous process was entirely paper-based within AACPS, lacking a centralized database that would allow active, real-time monitoring for accuracy and completion and allow threat assessment team members to collaborate electronically and efficiently to complete the steps of the process. Paper-only threat assessment records are not only less secure than electronic records but also less likely to transfer with student enrollment changes, as they are stored in administrators' files with no assurance that the records follow students from school to school. In addition to being inefficient and unreliable, the paper-only process creates both legal and ethical hazards for AACPS as a system; we know that a history of threats is a significant risk factor for future violence, but we do not effectively track them, potentially leaving AACPS without adequate documentation to defend any legal action that may occur because of violent acts.</p> <p>Finally, the lack of a centralized database to track threat assessment throughout AACPS leaves us unable to collect or analyze threat-related data that could help us identify trends and needs and effectively allocate resources within the school system. Shifting to a web-based system for threat assessment through Navigate 360 has allowed us to maintain our current comprehensive, research-based process for</p>



	addressing threats of violence while improving efficiency, security, and consistency, as well as giving us a means to track, analyze, and utilize threat-related data. This has been a key support for schools in ensuring that they are following the behavioral threat assessment process and ensuring that all students are safe.
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### **Anne Arundel County Mental Health Task Force**

In May 2019, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County voted to endorse the creation of a task force to address the mental health needs of children and adolescents in Anne Arundel County. Recognizing that the issues surrounding children's mental health and the work to combat those issues are bigger than any one agency, the Superintendent and the County Executive created a joint school district and county government task force. They decided that this joint task force should be co-chaired by Ryan Voegtlin, Director of Student Services Anne Arundel County Public Schools, and Adrienne Mickler, Executive Director of Anne Arundel Mental Health Agency.

On July 10, 2019, Mr. Voegtlin and Ms. Mickler presented a task force proposal to the Board. The goals of the task force were to (1) identify factors contributing to the increased mental health needs of our children; (2) better coordinate services and communication among the school system, county government, and providers; (3) identify proactive measures and best practices for improving child mental health; and (4) make recommendations for improved service delivery to children and families. With these four goals in mind, a task force that represented the diverse composition of the county was created. The task force included leadership representation from all health and human service departments of Anne Arundel County, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, the Anne Arundel County Police Department, and the Annapolis City Police Department. It also included providers of behavioral health services, family members, student representatives, and concerned citizens.

Subcommittees were created based on the contributing factors to the increase in mental health challenges in children and adolescents. The following is a list of the priority areas and the recommendations from each that surfaced as most prominent. These recommendations were presented to the Superintendent, Board of Education, and County Executive on October 7, 2020.

- **Discrimination, Bias, and Cultural Barriers**
  - Provide training on diversity (LGBTQIA+, race, ethnicity, culture) and the impact of racism.
- **Lack of Access to Resources and Mental Health Providers**

- Conduct an assessment/audit of student and family access to school-based mental health services and evaluate their performance to determine whether school-based mental health provider agencies should be expanded.
- **Mental Health Stigma**
  - Provide mental health education and professional development by using mental health first aid training for parents, teachers, adults, and teens; conduct suicide prevention training.
- **Parental Substance Abuse**
  - Expand support for families with substance abuse disorders.
- **Poverty**
  - Provide training in the areas of trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and the impact of poverty (including the impact of racism and gender discrimination).
- **Social Media**
  - Expand advertised suicide/mental health hotlines to include the use of text lines.
- **Stress and Pressure**
  - Educate parents and school staff on stress and anxiety in children and adolescents.
- **Trauma**
  - Expand the number of mobile crisis and crisis intervention teams available to schools.

### **Community Behavioral Health Collaboration**

AACPS has several important community behavioral health partnerships that must be highlighted in this report. AACPS staff rely on these agencies to find appropriate mental and behavioral health resources and community support for students and families.

The mission of the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency (AACMHA) is to provide leadership and collaboration for planning, monitoring, and managing a comprehensive, quality, person-centered, behavioral health continuum of care for mental health and substance use disorders that promote prevention, recovery, resiliency, health, and wellness for Anne Arundel County residents who have, or who are at risk for, these behavioral health disorders. The Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency is dedicated to ensuring that Medicaid recipients and other low-income, non-insured county residents who meet certain criteria have access to a wide range of quality mental health services.

The mission of the Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families is to assess community human services needs and identify gaps in service, convene a neutral group of diverse stakeholders to build partnerships and develop solutions, fund services for children and families by leveraging State funding and increasing local resources, and advance the Governor's priorities of reducing the impact of parental incarceration on children, families, and communities; improving outcomes for disconnected youth; reducing childhood hunger; and reducing youth homelessness.

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health's vision is a vibrant Anne Arundel County with healthy people in healthy communities. The mission is to preserve, promote and protect the health of all people who live, work, and play in Anne Arundel County. Strong, sustainable partnerships with individual residents, public sector agencies, community-based organizations, health care providers and insurers, academic institutions, businesses, and other private sector agencies are critical to achieving this vision and mission.

#### **Future Enhancements and Expansion of School-Based Behavioral Health Services**

AACPS has a robust offering of mental and behavioral health services available to students and families. As we look to enhance and expand these services in the future, there are a few areas that we would like to focus on.

Many of the programs and initiatives outlined in this report are grant-funded, and this funding ends in June 2024. We want to continue these programs when grant funding ends through the general budget of Anne Arundel County for the Fiscal Year 2025 and beyond. With the addition of Pre-K 3 classrooms through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, we would like to expand student services staffing, and support for these classrooms and Child Find. This would ensure that we provide adequate early intervention to support students struggling with behavioral health challenges at an early age.

AACPS Community Schools will continue to increase their funding allocations. Many of those funds will increase student services staffing, specifically additional school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors. All Community Schools will have at least a 1.0 school social worker by the beginning of their fourth year as a Community School.



In addition to an increase in Community Schools staffing, we would like to increase student services staffing in all schools throughout AACPS. Currently, AACPS is not meeting the recommended staff-to-student ratios for the American School Counseling Association, the School Social Workers Association of America, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Maryland Association of Pupil Personnel. Each school year, we look to continue increasing staffing in these areas to meet students' and families' mental and behavioral health needs.

School Health would like to develop school-based health centers in the future. Currently, Community Schools are offering dental services and sealants to third-grade students. We want to expand health services in all Community Schools to include easy access to a primary care physician and basic medication. This would eliminate barriers to healthcare and allow students to attend school more often.

Currently, AACPS provides substance use prevention support through the Screening Teens Access to Recovery (STAR) program and the Thrive Behavioral Health Substance Use Prevention and Intervention Team. In the future, we would like to expand student access to substance use support by giving students more opportunities to engage in treatment in the school setting. This would mean expanding the number of mental health and addiction clinicians in these two programs to meet the needs of all students in AACPS who are struggling with substance use.

AACPS would like to offer more options and services to students engaging in verbal and physical aggression. A new elementary therapeutic classroom opened in AACPS during the 2022-23 school year to support these students. The classroom offers a high staff-to-student ratio, increased mental and behavioral health support, family connections, small class sizes, and flexibility with scheduling. Depending upon the success of this program, AACPS would like to create more flexible options for students who are struggling with behavioral challenges to give them the support to be academically, socially, and behaviorally successful in the classroom.

### Summary

Anne Arundel County Public Schools continues to value students' mental and behavioral health support. This is evident through the increased student services staffing approved by our Superintendent, Board of Education, County Council, and County Executive over the past five school years. AACPS has utilized this staffing to provide high-quality, school-based mental health support. AACPS also relies on outside

partnerships, such as the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, Crisis Response System, Anne Arundel County Health Department, and Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, to support the needs of students and families. AACPS has also utilized federal grant funds to create programs and initiatives that address many of our students and families' mental and behavioral health needs.

As we move toward the future, AACPS looks forward to enhancing and expanding mental and behavioral health services by continuing grant-funded programs and initiatives, increasing student services staffing, creating school health centers, better addressing the needs of early learners, students with substance use challenges, and students who are engaging in aggressive behaviors. These enhancements will occur with continued partnerships and creative programming that will allow all AACPS students to be socially and emotionally available for learning and demonstrate academic success in the classroom.