

Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD)
Federal Grant #1H79SM081371-01
Mental Health Awareness Training Grants
Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Grant Period 09/30/18 – 09/29/21
Executive Summary
March 1, 2022

Following the results of a 2015 Alameda County Health Assets & Needs Assessment, indicating that students, staff, and parents in our District ranked the behavioral health of students to be their number one concern and the least utilized service, we applied for and were awarded two highly-competitive, multi-year Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) grants (SAMHSA and Department of Justice (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Assistance). Due to COVID-19, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grant was extended through the 2021-22 school year. The SAMHSA 3-year grant period ended in September and closed in January. This report will focus on the SAMHSA grant.

The main goals of the SAMHSA grant were to 1) increase the knowledge and capacity of school staff and parents to identify youth who may be in need of mental health services; and 2) to increase the number of youth 12-18 years of age identified for behavioral health treatment and linked to appropriate services.

In an effort to address #1, during the grant period we trained 516 staff, parents and community members in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), a certification program that teaches adults to recognize and respond to a mental health challenge in youth. Our original YMHFA training target population was middle and high school teachers, parents, administrators, School Resource Officers and District support staff. Leveraging resources, we expanded our training population to include elementary to high school office staff and paraprofessionals, elementary teachers, District office administrators, additional support staff, and community members. Additionally, we trained our District Superintendent and two school board members.

Following certification in Youth Mental Health First Aid, LVJUSD teachers reported an increase in their skills to recognize the signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge in youth pre to post-training, 37% before training as compared to 97% after being trained. Seventy-seven percent of teachers had reached out to a young person dealing with a mental health challenge; 74% reported using their YMHFA skills to support a youth in crisis and 90% reported recognizing and correcting misconceptions about mental health when encountered.

To address goal #2, we developed a network of community mental health partners and formed a Mental Health Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee mapped mental health resources in our community and developed referral procedures. A coordinated partnership with our partner agencies established a link within our District between students in need and the resources and services available to support them. During the grant period, we surpassed our mental health referral goal by 156%, with 2,721 individuals referred for mental health services.

To further support mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and increase access to information, resources, and support, we launched a Mental Health Website. All resources available on the website--including videos, articles,

outside agency referrals--are vetted by our District. Suicide Prevention Lifeline text and phone lines are provided throughout. In addition, we installed Mental Health Matters Information Centers at all secondary sites, which include brochures from our mental health partner agencies and informational hand-outs.

Next Steps

Studies conducted prior to the pandemic indicate that by the age of eighteen, 1 in 5 teens will experience a mental health challenge (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, SAMHSA 2016). Statistics prior to the pandemic also demonstrated that approximately 50% of mental health disorders begin by the age of 14 and 75 percent, by the mid-twenties, with less than half of children in need receiving mental health treatment in any given year. Since the start of the pandemic, symptoms of anxiety and depression in youth have increased, making it even more crucial that we continue to take preventive measures and address mental health challenges. Unrecognized, untreated, or inadequately treated mental health conditions can affect a student's ability to learn, grow, and develop.

It is clear that we must continue to address the mental health needs of our students-- including trauma, stress, anxiety, depression, substance use, and suicide prevention, through multiple programs and resources. Since the SAMHSA grant ended, we have continued to offer Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings for staff and parents. Wellness Centers are being established at some of our K-8 and secondary school sites, with the Livermore High School Wellness Center serving as the model. The Mental Health Awareness Advisory Committee has grown to include over 25 individuals representing our mental health partner agencies, District administration, Board members, school psychologists, counselors, school nurses, as well as a parent and student representative. The Mental Health Awareness Advisory Committee members are committed to continuing to meet three times annually to collaborate and support the mental health needs of our students, families, and staff.