Shifting the Culture in Schools: Addressing Mental Health and Trauma With a School Responder Model

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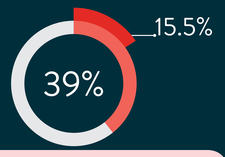
Introduction

Students with disabilities and students of color are more likely to be suspended when compared to their peers. Out-of-school suspension is associated with increased contact with the juvenile justice system.

of justice-involved youth have a mental health condition



of student suspensions are Black students, though they only account for 15.5% of the public school population

Methods

The National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice (NCYOJ) is conducting a quasi-experimental, mixed methods study designed to measure the effects of school safety interventions on systems level indicators over a period of three years. As part of this larger study, the Research Team is investigating outcomes associated with implementation of a school responder model (SRM) in Louisiana (n=4) and Michigan (n=4). The study will be complete in December 2020.

Preliminary Results and SRM Evidence

Connecticut	Nevada	ReNew Accelerated High School (Louisiana)	Schenectady High School (New York)
34% reduction in court referrals Connected 47% more students to behavioral health services	15% reduction in referrals to probation Universal screening for all students	49% decrease in suspensions in the 2018-2019 school year compared to the prior year	70% reduction in superintendent hearings in 2017-2018 when compared to the prior year

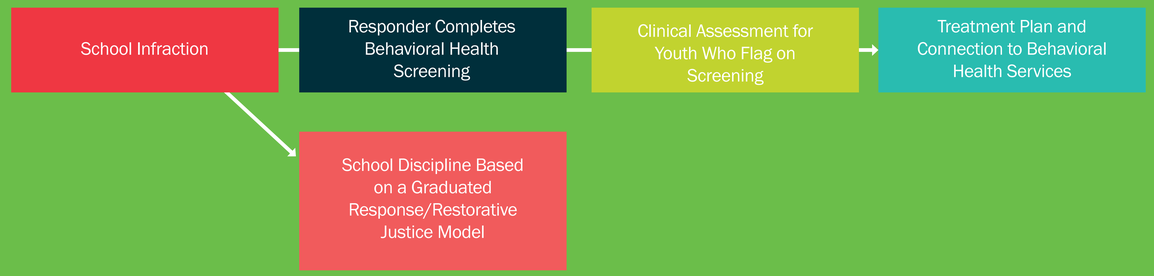
A goal of SRMs is to improve school climate. School climate data was collected as part of baseline data collection. Additional data will be available in December 2020. A School Climate total score of 4 or higher is considered a positive result.

Louisiana				Michigan			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
3.76	4.04	3.51	3.85	3.52	3.89	4.14	3.35

A school responder model (SRM) is a promising intervention for **identifying students at risk of mental health conditions** and connecting them with the services they need. This framework is also a promising intervention for **preventing student contact with the juvenile justice system**.

It is essential that we work to create an ecosystem that supports youth and delivers the behavioral health services they need rather than push them into the justice system.

An SRM is an approach to school safety that, when applied correctly, creates opportunities for addressing the mental health needs of youth, being explicit about trauma and its impact, and addressing disproportionality in schools.



A school responder model (SRM) is a behavioral health response to school infractions that provides an alternative to calling law enforcement and addresses root causes of disruptive behavior. In an SRM, a responder screens youth for behavioral health needs, which include mental and substance use disorders and traumatic exposure, and connects youth to effective community-based behavioral health services. An effective responder initiative will identify youth with behavioral health needs, reduce their disproportionate referral to the juvenile justice system, and increase their connection to appropriate and effective services.

An SRM has four key components:

- Cross-systems collaboration (e.g., mental health, law enforcement)
- Family and youth engagement
- Implementation of a behavioral health response, including screening, assessment, and services
- Creation of formal structures

An SRM has four guiding principles:

Trauma informed | Wellness and self-care | Cultural transformation | Restorative practices

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