

Testimony For State House Committee on Education
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Jen Colman, Founder of Green Mountain Mobile Therapy, a unique micro-transit model of direct mental health services for children and adolescents in Vermont. Green Mountain Mobile Therapy is a nonprofit organization that provides therapy and social/emotional services to Vermont's youth and families in locations that do not have appropriate therapeutic spaces and accessible services. As a private practice provider based 100% at schools, I have a unique perspective. I provide direct mental health across 5 schools K-12.

A structured-integrated mental health system of care does not exist in K-12 schools. Therefore, there is no data that tells us what delivery system works best for students.

Biggest Challenges for Mental Health Services

- The majority of schools do not have an appropriate space available for clinicians to provide services.
- The current mental health licensing constraints in Vermont are a massive barrier to clinicians providing direct service in schools.
- There is no direct funding for mental health in schools.
- Massive turnover invalidates the work and relationships needed to do the work with children.

Middle School Counselor:

"I believe that schools are currently not equipped to handle the huge amount of unprocessed stress in students' bodies and there is a need for school provided support along with DA provided supplemental support. Systems need to be in place to allow students who have experienced complex trauma to find systems of support before they can even begin to function consistently in a school environment. School systems need more assistance dealing with the effect of trauma on society (COVID-19, Racism, Sexism, Ableism, Mental Health Stigma, Housing Crisis...)."

DA School Supervisor:

- *"Mental "wellness" is a crucial component of academic success*
- *Kids in VT schools continue to have mental health needs (YRBS data)*

- *Providing opportunities for engagement in outpatient therapy during the school day enables some students (who might experience barriers to engagement such as limited access to transportation) to access a much needed source of support*
- *If you want people to provide this service then they need to be paid a competitive wage*
- *We need to be doing a better job in VT of recruiting mental health providers who share aspects of racial identity with the kids in our schools (i.e. more BIPOC mental health providers)”*

Elementary School Counselor:

“There is no direct Tier 3 mental health care system in schools. We can’t put all our eggs in 1 basket such as DA’s, which are not doing mental health, they are more social work focused. A school-based model is not sustainable because it is not supported.”

Direct Recommendations

1. Think creatively on funding alternative mental health services that allow for accessibility and break down barriers for children to access services.
2. Create a School-Based Mental Health License track that allows for providers to bill medicaid for direct and indirect services.

Conclusion

School-Based Mental Health services is a collaborative effort from various providers and stakeholders. It needs a systematic structure that is trauma-informed, supported by district leadership, AOE and our State legislative groups.

Resources:

National Center for School Mental Health

<https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<https://www.nctsn.org/>