

## 2023 School-Based Behavioral Health Services Survey Highlights

### Executive Summary

Across Ohio and beyond, recent research has highlighted the expanding prevalence and increasing severity of the youth mental health crisis. In 2023, Ohio's community behavioral health centers (CBHCs) have responded to the urgent behavioral health needs of students by **expanding partnerships with school districts by nearly 10%**. The 78 agencies who participated in the *2023 School-Based Behavioral Health Services Survey* are currently serving students in **584 individual school districts, private and charter schools** in a total of **2,964 individual school buildings**. Partnerships between schools and CBHCs have continued to grow despite widespread shortages in the behavioral health workforce. Services being provided in school-based settings included **prevention services (87.2%), school consultation (97.4%), and treatment services (87.2%)**.

Results from the *2023 School-Based Behavioral Health Services Survey Report* mirrored state and national data, highlighting interesting results in three broad areas: **Workforce challenges, expanded services, and funding shortfalls**. In addition to workforce challenges being experienced across the behavioral health field, **workforce challenges** are also impacting the education system, as school staff experience increased job stress and dissatisfaction trying to support students' growing and worsening mental health needs; and across the workforce at-large, as caregivers experience work disruptions trying to seek support for their children's mental health. As a result, school-based behavioral health (SBBH) providers have **expanded the range of services** they are providing in schools, participating in consultation with school staff and administrators, coordinating with parents and caregivers, and participating in threat assessment planning. Despite the growing need of students, survey results highlighted severe **funding shortfalls** as the top contributor for challenges across the workforce.

### Key Data Highlights

#### Workforce Challenges:

- 84.4% indicated challenges with workforce recruitment & retention.
- There are 335 full-time school-based behavioral health (SBBH) staff vacancies.
- Top barriers to providing SBBH services were a shortage of professionals (79.5%), and high need/long wait lists (50%).

#### Expanded Services:

- Over 1-in-3 SBBH providers (38.5%) are involved with threat assessment planning.
- Crisis De-Escalation & Behavior Management was the top needed service, according to SBBH providers.
- 79.5% of providers are participating in parent engagement.
- 70.5% of providers are providing Behavioral Health services directly to school staff members.

#### Funding Shortfalls:

- The top reason SBBH staff left their position in the past year was salary (77.6%).
- Medicaid is the primary payer of SBBH services (79.49%), leaving gaps in coverage for services not billable to managed care like school/teacher consultation, parent supports, threat assessments, or prevention services.
- Only 51% of providers received *any* funding from school districts; and of those providers, the funding from the districts only covered, on average, 14% of the actual SBBH services program costs.
- Even though Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid funding (DPIA) is intended to support youth mental wellness, only 29% of providers were accessing DPIA funds to help cover the cost of SBBH partnerships.

### Recommendations

To ensure students have the support and skills they need to thrive it is critical that we continue to invest in the expansion of school-based behavioral health services. Providing a dedicated and stable funding source for prevention, consultation, early intervention, referral, assessment, and treatment services in schools is the most critical investment we can make to protect youth mental health across Ohio.