



ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ONE

DECEMBER 31, 2022
THROUGH
DECEMBER 30, 2023



mental health &
recovery board
UNION COUNTY



EVALUATOR'S NOTE

BY TAMMY L. COLLINS, PHD, OCPC



The first year of Project AWARE brought about 50 new policy and organizational efforts to remove barriers and improve student mental wellness. Professionals and caregivers were trained to improve their mental health literacy which will support student and staff resiliency and coping.

The Project made great strides toward federally selected outcomes while also weaving the three Union County school systems together with community behavioral health providers and the MHRB into a more seamless collaboration to improve student mental health outcomes. A total of 7,589 screenings were conducted in schools, and 599 referrals were made to evidence-based and trauma-informed behavioral health interventions. There were 207 students newly enrolled in mental health services with 138 of these finishing their course of treatment and being discharged within the reporting year.

SYSTEMS OUTCOMES	ACCOMPLISHMENTS	2022–2023
Improvements in partnerships between schools and mental health organizations	Organizational changes made to improve the youth mental health service system	10
Workforce Development	Individuals (professionals and caregivers) trained in prevention and/or mental health promotion (some individuals may be counted more than once in the total if they attended multiple trainings)	1,525
Changes in school climate and school safety	Policies developed or changed to improve school climate and student mental health	40
Improved capacity to identify students in need of support and link them to trauma-informed, evidence-based mental health services and other resources	Screenings conducted	7,589
YOUTH RESILIENCY OUTCOMES	ACCOMPLISHMENTS	2022–2023
Increased awareness of school-based mental health supports	Referrals made for students to school-based mental health services and supports	599
Increased student resiliency and coping skills	Students newly enrolled in mental health treatment services	207
Improved student mental health outcomes	Students discharged from care	138



WHAT IS PROJECT AWARE?

Project AWARE is a school-based behavioral health initiative serving local school districts in Union County. We are thrilled to be partnering with our school and community partners to expand comprehensive behavioral health services and supports for students and staff, both in the schools and in the community.

Our work includes enhancing prevention, screening, early intervention, access, and connection to behavioral health services in order to reduce barriers and help Union County students and families thrive. Our people are our greatest asset and we are thankful for the opportunity to support the amazing professionals who serve our youth.



PROJECT AWARE – YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS

- The Mosaic Line received 204 calls between December 31, 2022 and December 30, 2023.
- School Navigators served 286 students in Union County schools.
- Multi-Tiered System of Support Teams served 522 students in Union County schools.
- 2,928 students were served by prevention programming in Union County schools.
- 793 educators participated in the Be Kind to Your Mind Mental Health Literacy and Anti-Stigma Campaign.
- 91 professionals participated in training opportunities to increase their mental health literacy.





SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

3,253 STUDENTS SERVED

Too Good for Drugs: A universal prevention education program designed to mitigate the risk factors and enhance protective factors related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use. Union County 4th and 6th grade students developed social and emotional skills for making healthy choices, building positive friendships, developing self-efficacy, communicating effectively, and resisting peer pressure and influence.

Total Served: 1,263 students

DBT Steps A: A 20-session suicide prevention universal program based on DBT Therapy. Middle and high school students learn coping skills, emotional regulation, problem solving and mindfulness.

Total Served: 1,223 students

Botvin LifeSkills: A ten-session high school SUD prevention program that reinforces healthy decision making by teaching low-risk behaviors choices and emotional impact.

Total Served: 202 students

Project ALERT: An eleven-session middle school SUD prevention program that enhances and encourages the use of refusal skills in promoting healthy behaviors including drug-free life choices.

Total Served: 146 students

Gatekeepers Youth-Led Programming: High School opportunity for teens invested in helping peers find help for concerns of mental health and suicidal ideation.

Total Served: 94 students

Signs of Suicide: A two-session suicide prevention program based upon the ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) model when concerned about suicidal thoughts or actions for self or peers.

Total Served: 325 students





UNIVERSAL SCHOOL-BASED SCREENING

6,347 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED

15.7% of the 6,347 students who participated in universal school-based screening were identified as needing additional assessment and/or intervention.

- 737 elementary students screened positive for additional assessment and/or intervention.
- 261 middle school students screened positive for additional assessment and/or intervention.

School-based staff worked as a team to determine next steps for identified students. Outcomes included MTSS Team Referral, School Navigation Referral, BCBA Referral, and other school-based targeted interventions.



SCHOOL NAVIGATION

School navigators were embedded in 3 Union County school districts. Between December 31, 2022, and December 30, 2023, 286 students were engaged with school navigation services.



MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT TEAMS

Between 3 Union County school districts, 522 students were served by school-based Multi-Tiered System of Support Teams. These teams consist of administrators, school navigators, school counselors, school psychologists, Project AWARE coordinators and other key stakeholders.





STAFF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS SURVEY

Project AWARE administered a staff survey to Union County educators in December 2023 to gain feedback on support needed for student and educator mental health and wellness. 280 educators provided feedback.

Across the three school districts, the top themes that arose from comments were that many more behavioral health professionals were needed within each school to assist the growing needs of students. In line with this theme were requests for student self-regulation support and training for teachers to better understand and respond to student and family behavioral health needs.

The second theme was that changes in education structures and processes are needed to better support new challenges faced by students, educators and families. In line with this theme was a need for additional resources for educators including additional time during their paid workday to better meet individual student needs, lower student to teacher ratios, access to substitutes, appreciation from administrators, easy to access behavioral health and wellness supports for educators as well as students.

MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY & ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN



793 educators across 3 Union County school districts participated in the Be Kind to Your Mind campaign.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON ADVANCING SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH



3 MHRBUC staff members and one school district leader attended this conference.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

91 professionals from Union County schools, community behavioral health organizations, and other youth-serving organizations participated in training opportunities including: Bounce Back, Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Trauma in Schools, De-escalation Strategies, Life Space Crisis Intervention, PAX Good Behavior Game, and Support for Students Exposed to Trauma.

100% of training participants demonstrated an increase in knowledge post-training experience.



LIFE SPACE CRISIS
INTERVENTION
TRAINING
PARTICIPANTS
NOVEMBER 2023

FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH SERIES



COOK CENTER FOR
HUMAN CONNECTION



MHRBUC partnered with the Cook Center for Human Connection to offer a Family Mental Health Series. 6 virtual sessions were held and 165 individuals registered for these sessions. Topics included: Your Child's Anxiety, Emotional Regulation: What's Wrong, Emotional Regulation: Interrupting Negative Emotions, Effects of Screen Time, School Avoidance, and Establishing Healthy Boundaries.



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