

## ALAMEDA COUNTY

# Mental Health Student Services Act Partnership Program

**In 2019, California’s Senate Bill 75 funded the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA). The Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) awards MHSSA grants to County Behavioral Health Departments to establish mental health partnerships with their County Office of Education and School Districts to meet student mental health needs. In 2022, Alameda County received a four-year grant to implement the MHSSA Partnership Program.**

### 2023-24 Reach of MHSSA Activities

<b>1,110</b>	students and staff received education and training in 4 districts
<b>1,146</b>	students received behavioral health prevention/intervention services in 6 districts
<b>414</b>	students received intensive behavioral health counseling in 6 districts

### Partnership Overview

The Alameda County MHSSA Partnership Program is administered by Alameda County Health’s Healthy Schools and Communities (ACHSC) Division, in close partnership with Alameda County Health’s Behavioral Health Division and Alameda County Office of Education.

A priority for ACHSC continues to be to spread and sustain support for Districts and community-based organization (CBO) partners to build successful school health infrastructure and partnerships. ACHSC is collaborating with our internal and external partners to use MHSSA funds to address the unique mental health and wellness in six high-priority School Districts across Alameda County:

- Alameda County Office of Education Student Programs and Services
- Hayward Unified School District
- Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District
- Newark Unified School District
- Oakland Unified School District
- San Lorenzo Unified School District

Through the MHSSA Partnership Program, these organizations and School Districts are working to improve systems coordination and to increase access across the Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) to improve youth life skills, health, and wellbeing.



## 2023-24 Summary of Activities

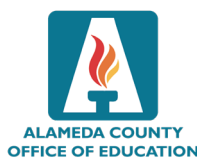
The following highlights key successes of each of the Alameda County MHSSA Partnership Program partners during the 2023-24 school year.

**Alameda County Health's Healthy Schools and Communities (ACHSC) Division** spreads and sustains school health services and infrastructure across the county. During the 2023-24 school year with MHSSA funding, ACHSC staff supported consultation and support for Districts on school based behavioral health partnerships. They also provided consultation, counseling, and case management support services to Oakland and Hayward Unified School District students.

**The Alameda County Behavioral Health Department (ACBHD)** supports countywide school-based behavioral health services by participating in meetings with county and community partners, hosting Medi-Cal/Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) Services Learning Communities, and providing technical assistance on school-based behavioral health service delivery.



**The Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE)** collaborates with Alameda County schools and County Health to support school-based behavioral health and a broad range of health and wellness supports. Due to many recent shifts at the State level, including the State's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), their role continues to expand and could help with the sustainability of MHSSA programs.



**ACOE Student Programs and Services (SPaS)** schools provide academic instruction and support services to justice-involved youth, foster and homeless youth, and pregnant and parenting minors. The schools support students in achieving the goals necessary to be re-enrolled in mainstream schools. Through the MHSSA grant during the 2023-24 school year, 327 SPaS students received 739 Tier 2 classroom support services sessions, and 151 students received 426 Tier 3 case management services from MHSSA-funded staff. In addition, ACHSC staff provided SPaS staff with group coaching and consultation.

**MHSSA in Action:** An MHSSA-funded SPaS provider worked with a student who fell far behind academically and became involved with the juvenile justice system. The school counselor and the provider worked together to help the student improve their behavior and academic performance and ultimately graduate on time.

**Hayward Unified School District (HUSD)** is working to expand their successful Peer Advisory program beyond its current implementation at two high schools to all district high schools. During the 2023-24 school year, the district invested in program materials, developed curriculum materials, and created a comprehensive implementation plan for district-wide expansion. In addition, ACHSC staff trained HUSD teachers on Community Circles, reached 292 students through 43 sessions of Tier 2 case management, classroom support, and youth development services, and reached 36 students through 67 sessions of Tier 3 individual counseling services.



Made in Hayward



**MHSSA in Action:** ACHSC staff trained classroom HUSD teachers to implement and lead weekly Classroom Community Circles with their students. The goal was to create a structure in which staff and students could get to know each other in a safe, consistent, and supportive space. Setting up a Circle includes identifying core values and guidelines with student input, designing circle questions that engage students in thoughtful sharing, and building an inclusive welcoming classroom. ACHSC staff share all circle materials and model implementation, and then support the teacher in leading it themselves moving forward.

**Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD)**

subcontracts with Horizons Family Counseling to provide MHSSA-funded services across the spectrum of MTSS. During the 2023-24 school year, Horizons developed and delivered mental health-focused presentations for classrooms, reached 21 students through 28 sessions of Tier 2 student support groups, and reached 89 students through 392 sessions of Tier 3 individual therapy services.



**MHSSA in Action:** An LVJUSD student received MHSSA-funded school-based counseling services to help with emotional regulation and reduce self-harm risk. Due to financial stressors and transportation barriers, this student would not otherwise be able to access mental health services. The student reported benefiting from having a safe space to share, process prior traumas, and develop new coping skills. The school-based behavioral health provider also worked with the student's parent to develop a plan to connect the student to an outside specialist to assess their mental health needs further.

**Newark Unified School District (NUSD)** partners with Character Strong to train school/district staff on implementing a Tier 1 social-emotional learning curriculum. NUSD also works with two community mental health agencies, the East Bay Agency for Children and Wellness Together, to provide Tier 3 therapeutic services to students. During the 2023-24 school year, NUSD reached 40 students through 536 Tier 3 individual counseling services. In addition, ACHSC staff provided behavioral health coaching and assistance with behavioral health systems and services coordination for NUSD staff. NUSD leaders reported that these partnerships allow them to serve students who otherwise would not have access to mental health services, whether due to a lack of insurance or a family's inability to secure services offsite.

**NEWARK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**MHSSA in Action:** An NUSD student was dealing with a crisis at school, and the MHSSA-funded school-based provider was able to help the student with emotional regulation. With the MHSSA grant allowing the provider to work onsite, the student was able to receive immediate support. The provider was able to help de-escalate the situation, allowing the student to feel safe and validated and be able to return to the school day.



**Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)** partners with ACHSC staff to expand high school Peer Wellness Mentoring programs and launch a Peer Wellness Learning Community. The programs vary from elective courses to after-school programs, internships, or lunch clubs. This strategy expands early intervention for students who would benefit from peer support and builds a pipeline for Oakland youth into school-based mental health careers.

**MHSSA in Action:** An OUSD student who graduated from Madison Park Academy (MPA) returned to the MPA Peer Wellness Mentoring Program as staff through funds provided by the MHSSA grant. They attended a Peer Wellness Learning Community meeting where they shared their experience as a peer mentor and the program's impact on them. This demonstrates how peer wellness programs can create real work experience and a professional pipeline into education and behavioral health careers.

In addition, during the 2023-24 school year, ACHSC staff reached 506 OUSD students through 433 sessions of Tier 2 services and 30 students through 115 sessions of Tier 3 services. Tier 2 and Tier 3 student services included individual or group therapy, newcomer support groups, peer mentoring/peer support, brief counseling, and case management. ACHSC staff also coordinated a Language Navigators Peer Support program at MPA. Twelve Language Navigator mentors met regularly with English-speaking teachers to support their instruction in class with students new to the English language and the school.

**OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students





**San Lorenzo Unified School District (SLZUSD)** partners with Daybreak clinicians to deliver intensive Tier 3 mental health services to students through telehealth services. During the 2023-24 school year, Daybreak provided 599 individual therapy sessions to 68 students, addressing challenges including anger management, depression, anxiety, and relationship issues with family and peers. SLZUSD leaders reported seeing an increase in referrals through the Coordination of Services Teams and launched a QR code/link to allow students and families to self-refer to services. In addition, ACHSC staff assisted the district with systems support discussions in SLZUSD. A portion of the MHSSA funding in SLZUSD also focused on support and education for LGBTQ+ youth and their families, including fulfilling a booklist of LGBTQ+ titles and distributing them to library collections at school sites.



SAN LORENZO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**MHSSA in Action:** A school social worker referred a SLZUSD student who was struggling with anxiety and anger management to the MHSSA-funded behavioral health provider. In working with the provider, the student learned how to implement coping skills to decrease anxiety and angry outbursts. After completing the counseling program, the student was discharged with a plan to help continue reducing anxiety and improving emotional self-regulation.

In partnership with ACHSC and the Alameda County Cannabis Education and Prevention Initiative, **The Social Changery** developed a parent workshop and supplemental educational materials for distribution to parents and caregivers about how to facilitate conversations with young people about cannabis use. The Social Changery trained ACHSC staff on how to deliver the workshop. ACHSC staff then led trainings to teach family liaisons from school districts and community organizations how to offer the workshop to parents. In addition, The Social Changery trained staff from ACHSC and ACBHD, as well as youth organizations that partner with ACHSC, on how to play and facilitate Escape Games Decoded Multiverse Mayhem. This escape room-style game is designed for use in classrooms or after-school programs to foster collaboration and effective communication as participants work together to solve puzzles, negotiate, and manage conflicts. Additionally, they provided 750 games to ACHSC and partners.





## Student Impact

After participation in MHSSA-funded programs, 94 middle and high school students completed the *Alameda County Youth Services Survey* in Spring 2024.

Nearly all *Alameda County Youth Services Survey* respondents reported that the people who work at the MHSSA-funded programs helped them to:

**Get along better with friends or other people their age**

98%

**Do better in school**

98%

**Develop goals or plans for their future**

97%

**Learn how to deal with stress or anxiety better**

95%

**Get along better with their family**

94%

Nearly all *Alameda County Youth Services Survey* respondents reported positive impacts on their personal development as a result of the MHSSA-funded programs, including that they:

**Feel better about their future**

99%

**Are more prepared to seek out support when they need it**

97%

**Learned ways to manage stress or emotional challenges**

97%

**Have someone to turn to when they need to talk about their problems**

97%

**Feel like they are part of the school community**

94%

## Looking Ahead

**The MHSSA grant in Alameda County has strengthened county, school, and community-level partnerships to better serve students needing support. With two years remaining in the MHSSA grant, we anticipate that these programs will become even more streamlined in the array of services offered in the participating schools, and the number of students reached will increase.**



For more information about the Alameda County MHSSA Partnership Program, please contact Kate Graves at [Kate.Graves@acgov.org](mailto:Kate.Graves@acgov.org).

This brief was developed by the [School Health Evaluation & Research](#) team from the **University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)**. ACHSC contracted with UCSF to evaluate the MHSSA Partnership Program. Evaluation data for this brief were collected through ACHSC, ACBHD, The Social Changery, School District Lead *Quarterly Reports*, the ACHSC Service and Technical Assistance *Tracking Tool*, and the *Alameda County Youth Services Survey*.

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School Health  
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