2026-27

HOPE
COMMUNICATION
RESILIENCE
WELLNESS
KINDNESS

FAMILY
POSITIVITY
AWARENESS
WELLNESS
MENTAL HEALTH

Student Leadership Academy - Sarasota

MENTAL HEALTH APPLICATION

Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
fldoe.org

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I. Introduction

Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Mental Health Assistance Allocation (MHAA) is to provide funding to assist school districts in establishing or expanding school-based mental health care; train educators and other school staff in responding to mental health issues; and connect children, youth and families who may experience behavioral health issues with appropriate services.

These funds are allocated annually in the General Appropriations Act to each eligible school district. Each school district shall receive a minimum of $100,000, with the remaining balance allocated based on each school district's proportionate share of the state's total unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment.

Charter schools that submit a plan separate from the school district are entitled to a proportionate share of district funding. A charter school plan must comply with all of the provisions of this section, must be approved by the charter school's governing body, and must be provided to the charter school's sponsor. *(Section [s.] 1006.041, Florida Statutes [F.S.])*

Submission Process and Deadline

The application must be submitted to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) by **August 1, 2025.**

There are two submission options for charter schools:

- Option 1: District submission includes charter schools in their application.
- Option 2: Charter school(s) submit a separate application from the district.

II. MHAA Plan

A. MHAA Plan Assurances

1. District Assurances

One hundred percent of state funds are used to establish or expand school-based mental health care; train educators and other school staff in detecting and responding to mental health issues; and connect children, youth and families with appropriate behavioral health services.

Other sources of funding will be maximized to provide school-based mental health services (e.g., Medicaid reimbursement, third-party payments and grants).

Collaboration with FDOE to disseminate mental health information and resources to students and families.

A system is included for tracking the number of students at high risk for mental health or co-occurring substance use disorders who received mental health screenings or assessments; the number of students referred to school-based mental health services providers; the number of students referred to community-based mental health services providers; the number of students who received school-based interventions, services or assistance; and the number of students who received community-based interventions, services or assistance.

Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plans for charter schools that opt out of the District's MHAA Plan are reviewed for compliance.

Curriculum and materials purchased using MHAA funds have received a thorough review and all content is in compliance with State Board of Education Rules and Florida Statutes.

The MHAA Plan must be focused on a multi-tiered system of supports to deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and to students at high risk of such diagnoses. Section 1006.041, F.S.

2. School Board Policies

Students referred to a school-based or community-based mental health services provider, for mental health screening for the identification of mental health concerns and students at risk for mental health disorders are assessed within 15 calendar days of referral.

School-based mental health services are initiated within 15 calendar days of identification and assessment.

Community-based mental health services are initiated within 30 calendar days of referral.

Individuals living in a household with a student receiving services are provided information about behavioral health services through other delivery systems or payors for which such individuals may qualify if such services appear to be needed or enhancements in those individuals' behavioral health would contribute to the improved well-being of the student.

District schools and local mobile response teams use the same suicide screening instrument approved by FDOE pursuant to s. 1012.583, F.S., and Rule 6A-4.0010, Florida Administrative Code.

Assisting a mental health services provider or a behavioral health provider as described in s. 1006.041, F.S., respectively, or a school resource officer or school safety officer who has completed mental health crisis intervention training in attempting to verbally de-escalate a student's crisis situation before initiating an involuntary examination pursuant to s. 394.463, F.S. Such procedures must include strategies to de-escalate a crisis situation for a student with a developmental disability as that term is defined in s. 393.063, F.S.

The requirement that in a student crisis situation, the school or law enforcement personnel must make a reasonable attempt to contact a mental health professional who may initiate an involuntary examination pursuant to s. 394.463, F.S., unless the child poses an imminent danger to self or others before initiating an involuntary examination pursuant to s. 394.463, F.S. Such contact may be in person or using telehealth, as defined in s. 456.47, F.S. The mental health professional may be available to the school district either by contracts or interagency agreements with the managing entity, one or more local community behavioral health providers, the local mobile response team, or be a direct or contracted school district employee. Note: All initiated involuntary examinations located on school grounds, on school transportation or at a school-sponsored activity must be documented in the Involuntary Examinations and Restraint and Seclusion (IERS) platform.

Parents of students receiving services are provided information about other behavioral health services available through the student's school or local community-based behavioral health service providers. Schools may meet this requirement by providing information about and internet addresses for web-based directories or guides for local behavioral health services.

B. District Program Implementation

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

Description: The school counselors and faculty provide social skills education and training, using the methods taught by the Youth Mental Health First Aid program. These occur in advisory class, physical education classes, health classes, and in all core classes via brain break and mindfulness activities.

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

- Advisory
- Career Pathways
- Interest Surveys
- Counselor led Character Ed Program
- LMHC/LCSW/PsyD Counselor Sessions

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students: Students deal with stressors, learn preventative measures, and implement coping skills.

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #2

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

- Description: In addition to managing SWST, MTSS, and RTI, SLA's Counseling and Student Support Services department and ESE department develops weekly guidance lessons that focus on character building while also addressing mental health topics like self-harm, suicidal ideation, adolescent depression, negative and positive coping strategies, expressing feelings, and knowing who your resources are for help. We also collaborate with local organizations and bring in representatives to speak to our students about internet safety, bullying, dating curriculum, provided to families and students, below.

Character Development & Health Curriculum
Below you will find the Character Development & Health topics that will be presented to students at SLA during school hours. Specific dates of sex education courses will be provided to students and families at least one week prior to the lesson. These lessons are provided through the Physical Education department, School Health department or through the School Counseling department.

6th Grade:
• Success in Middle School/Goal setting
• Managing Emotions/Depression & Self-harm
• Stress Management
• Self-Esteem/Body image
• Empathy
• Career Exploration
• Bullying
• Internet Safety
• Tobacco/Drug/Alcohol/ Vaping Awareness
• Human Trafficking/Child Sex Trafficking
• Hygiene
• Nutrition

7th and 8th Grade:
• Internet Safety
• Tobacco/Drug/Alcohol/ Vaping Awareness
• Human Trafficking/Child Sex Trafficking
• Sex Education (presentation by Sarasota County Health Department)
• Human Biology and reproduction (presented in Life Science class)
• Healthy Relationships
• Career Exploration
• Depression & Self-harm

*Topics are subject to change and additional topics may be added, which will be communicated through email communication. If you wish to opt out of any of these topics, please contact Katie Hunt at katie.hunt@sarasotacountyschools.net, include the topic you wish to opt out of, as well as your name and your child's name. Tobacco, vaping, drug awareness, sex ed, and human trafficking prevention are all required by law, but you may opt out of these, if you wish.

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

- MTSS/SWST
- Individual planning sessions
- Goal setting and Interest Inventories
- LMHC/LCSW/PsyD Counseling
- On site high school registrations

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students:

- Improved academics
- Increased student enrollment in district high school programs.
- Decreased behavior statistics.

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #3

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

Description:

Student Leadership Academy (SLA) contracts with Licensed School Psychologists (PsyD), Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHC), and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) to provide 50-minute, weekly sessions, during the school day, virtually or on site, or after hours, if requested, by families. The services are paid for using the mental health allocation. Our LMHC and LCSW provide individualized cognitive and behavioral therapy support in addition to evidence-based youth and adolescent focused psychotherapeutic interventions.

Mental health screenings and assessments will take place when there is a report of self-injury, suicidal ideation, and threat assessments. Other scenarios include students who are at risk of harming others, experiencing severe anger, hallucinating, and/or having a mental breakdown. Once a student of concern is identified, the school counselor screens the student by using the "assessment worksheet." A parent is immediately contacted and a 'duty to inform' letter is completed with specific details of the incident and sent to the parent/guardian. If the scenario is considered "low risk," a safety plan is completed with the student and counselor. If the scenario is moderate to high risk, the counselor brings in local law enforcement. The police officer will determine whether the student needs to be placed under the Baker Act. If the student is placed under the Baker Act, the parent/guardian is notified of the events after the police assessment and determination.

In compliance with the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, SLA has created a threat assessment (management) team that will employ evaluations, assessments, and treatment for students that may be at risk or pose a threat to others. Individualized intervention, as part of the mental health treatment plan, created by the PsyD/LCSW/LMHC will be employed following an evaluation within 24 hours of the threat. If the evaluation does not occur the day of the possible threat report, the student will be removed from the school until the evaluation takes place, within the 24-hour deadline. Law enforcement will be contacted, as appropriate.

A Release of Information will be obtained by the parent/caregiver. The mental health evaluation and treatment plan will be sent to the student's primary care provider as well as their mental health provider if they have one.

If the student does not have a mental health provider, counseling services, as outlined in the mental health treatment plan, will be provided, at the school, with no cost for the family, and contracted through our LCSW (licensed clinical social worker) or LMHC (licensed mental health counselor).

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral

problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

- Individual sessions with LMHC/LCSW/PsyD
- Small group counseling with LMHC/LCSW/PsyD

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students:

- Decreased behavior episodes.
- Increased attendance.
- Decrease in anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations.
- Decrease in violent behaviors and threats.
- Increase resiliency and coping mechanisms.

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #4

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

Description:

- Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET): A school-based group intervention for students who have been exposed to traumatic events and are suffering from symptoms of PTSD.
- Individual sessions with LMHC/LCSW/PsyD

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

Teachers and School Counselors will teach many cognitive and behavioral skills, such as social problem solving, psychoeducation and relaxation.

The program consists of ten (10) 30-minute lessons designed to be delivered during one class period.These lessons focus on:

- common reactions to trauma
- relaxation techniques
- coping strategies
- learning to approach difficult situations.
- developing a trauma narrative

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students:
Through the use of this evidence-based program, middle school students ages 10-14 will learn to deal with real-life problems and stressors and increase levels of peer and parent support.

To increase skill-building techniques to reduce current problems with:

- anxiety or nervousness
- withdrawal or isolation
- depressed mood
- acting out in school
- impulsive or risky behavior

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #5

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #6

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

Description:

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students:

Evidence-Based Program (EBP) #7

Evidence-Based Program (EBP)

Tier(s) of Implementation

Describe the key EBP components that will be implemented.

Description:

Early Identification

Explain how your district will implement evidence-based mental health services for students to improve the early identification of social, emotional or behavioral problems or substance use disorders, as well as the likelihood of at-risk students developing social emotional or behavioral problems, depression, anxiety disorders or suicidal tendencies, and how these will assist students dealing with trauma and violence.

Early Identification:

High Risk Students

Explain how the supports will deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more mental health or co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses.

High Risk Students:

C. Direct Employment

1. MHAA Plan Direct Employment

School Counselor
Current Ratio as of August 1, 2026: **1:330**

School Counselor
2026-2027 proposed Ratio by June 30, 2026: **1:330**

School Social Worker
Current Ratio as of August 1, 2026: **1:330**

School Social Worker
2026-2027 proposed Ratio by June 30, 2026 **1:330**

School Psychologist
Current Ratio as of August 1, 2026: **1:330**

School Psychologist
2026-2027 proposed Ratio by June 30, 2027 **1:330**

Other Licensed Mental Health Provider
Current Ratio as of August 1, 2026: **1:150**

Other Licensed Mental Health Provider
2026-2027 proposed Ratio by June 30, 2027: **1:75**

2. Policy, Roles and Responsibilities

Explain how direct employment of school-based mental health services providers (school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and other licensed mental health professionals) will reduce staff-to-student ratios.

- Direct employment of school-based mental health providers allows our school to now provide mental health services and counseling to many more students, while reducing the actual ratio of student to mental health provider/ expert to 1:75. Before the mental health allocation and plan requirements (prior to 2018-2019 school year) our mental health provider to student ratio was 1:300.

Describe your district's established policies and procedures to increase the amount of time student services personnel spend providing direct mental health services (e.g., review and revision of staffing allocations based on school or student mental health assistance needs).

- Our LMHC/LCSW/PsyD spends 100% of their allocated time providing direct services.
- Our school counselor spends 50% of their time on direct services.

Describe the role of school-based mental health providers and community-based partners in the implementation of your evidence-based mental health program.

- SLA takes pride in their progressive character education program. We utilize the following community providers:
- Child Protection Center for Internet Safety
- Selah Freedom for Human Trafficking and Child Sex Trafficking Training (for staff and students)
- First Step for Tobacco, Vaping, Alcohol, and Drug Awareness
- Sarasota County Department of Health for Sex Education, AIDS and STI Education, and Human Reproduction

3. Community Contracts/Interagency Agreements

List the contracts or interagency agreements with local behavioral health providers or Community Action Team (CAT) services and specify the type of behavioral health services being provided on or off the school campus.

Student Leadership Academy (SLA) strives to support our students and families through many different modes of support, including Tier I and Tier II Response to Intervention strategies (RTI) and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Students of concern are referred to the School-wide Support Team (SWST), which meets once a month to discuss students of concern and develop/implement academic and social-emotions interventions. The RTI process and interventions are managed by the Student Support Services department. At SLA, the Student Support Services department's mission is to provide a comprehensive curriculum to all students that addresses the academic, career, and social/emotional development of all students. In addition to managing SWST and RTI, SLA's Student Support Services department spends time delivering developmental guidance lessons that focus on character building while also addressing mental health topics like self-harm, suicidal ideation, adolescent depression, negative and positive coping strategies, expressing feelings, and knowing who your resources are for help. We also collaborate with local organizations and bring in representatives to speak to our students about internet safety, bullying, dating violence, substance abuse, and positive relationships.

Additionally, we have contracted with licensed school psychologists, licensed mental health counselors and licensed clinical social workers for students who are demonstrating a need for more intensive interventions and need a treatment plan that is managed by mental health professionals. Students who are referred for mental health services participate in a mental health comprehensive intake process, including parental/family involvement and participation, and possibly coordination with physicians, psychiatrists, and other medical providers. The PsyD/LMHC/LCSW meets with families and the student for intake. After this meeting occurs, they meet with the student alone, for 50-minute sessions, provided virtually and/or in-person. A few families choose for their child to meet with the PsyD/LMHC/LCSW after school hours. Both are paid for and contracted by the school. The PsyD/LMHC/LCSW notifies authorities and/or the school if the student presents a risk to themselves or others. The PsyD/LMHC/LCSW is a member of our SWST and provides quarterly updates (or as needed) in order to provide wrap-around services within our school community, if necessary. To streamline the process of identifying students who may need additional support, we have created a Threat Management Team that includes members from different areas of professional expertise, including our School Safety Officer. All students that make a threat to themselves or others are discussed, assessed, and monitored by the Threat Management Team.

SLA's Threat and Mental Health Management Team includes:

- School Counselor
- School Administrators (Principal AND Asst. Principal)
- School Safety Officer (Guardian)
- Sarasota County School Police Dept. Officer (SCSPD)
- Instructional Staff / Teacher
- ESE Liaison & Gifted Specialist (as appropriate)
- Clinic Nurse (RN) and County Health Nurse (as appropriate)

D. MHAA Planned Funds and Expenditures

1. Allocation Funding Summary

MHAA funds provided in the 2026-2027 Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP):	**$21,665.00**
Unexpended MHAA funds from previous fiscal years:	**$0.00**
Grand Total MHAA Funds:	**$21,665.00**

2. MHAA planned Funds and Expenditures Form

Please complete the **MHAA planned Funds and Expenditures Form** to verify the use of funds in accordance with s. 1006.041, F.S.

School districts are encouraged to maximize third-party health insurance benefits and Medicaid claiming for services, where appropriate.

E. District School Board Approval

This application certifies that the School Superintendent and School Board approved the district's MHAA Plan, which outlines the local program and planned expenditures to establish or expand school-based mental health care consistent with the statutory requirements for the MHAA in accordance with s. 1006.041(14), F.S.

Note: The charter schools listed below have ***Opted Out*** of the district's MHAA Plan and are expected to submit their own MHAA Plan to the District for review.

Charter School Number and Name
0074 Sarasota Military Academy, High School and Prep Campuses

Charter School Number and Name
0081 Suncoast School for Innovative Studies

Charter School Number and Name
0083 Sarasota School of Arts and Sciences

Charter School Number and Name
0120 Dreamers Academy

Charter School Number and Name
0090 Island Village Montessori

Charter School Number and Name
0103 Imagine School at North Port

Charter School Number and Name
0113 Sarasota Academy of the Arts

Charter School Number and Name
0100 Sarasota Suncoast Academy

Charter School Number and Name
0122 State College of Florida Collegiate School Venice

Charter School Number and Name
0102 Student Leadership Academy

Charter School Number and Name
0106 Imagine School at Palmer Ranch

Charter School Number and Name
0110 Sky Academy Venice

Charter School Number and Name
0117 Sky Academy Englewood

Charter School Number and Name
1501 College Prep of Wellen Park

Approval Date: