



American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) School Mental Health Specialist Grant Program

Interim Report - February 2025

Connecticut State Department of Education

Charlene M. Russell-Tucker

Commissioner

ARPA - School Mental Health Specialist Grant Program

Purpose

To assist Connecticut local and regional school districts in hiring and retaining additional school social workers, school psychologists, trauma specialists, behavior technicians, board-certified behavior analysts, school counselors, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists.

Authorization

[Public Act 22-47](#) established the School Mental Health Specialist Grant Program, which authorized the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to provide grants to school districts. These grants are intended to help schools hire and retain additional mental health professionals, including school social workers, psychologists, trauma specialists, behavior technicians, board-certified behavior analysts, school counselors, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists.

[Public Act 23-167](#) further refined the program by removing the requirement to align the three-year funding with state fiscal year deadlines. This change allows grant recipients to fully utilize and carry forward funds throughout the entire allowable performance period, in line with the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Grant Program Announcement

March 10, 2023

[RFP 839 ARPA School Mental Health Specialist Grant](#)

Grant Award Announcement

August 3, 2023

[Governor Lamont and Commissioner Russell-Tucker Announce Recipients of School Mental Health Specialist Grants](#)

Grant Award Process

The CSDE awarded \$15 million in ARPA grant funding to 71 school districts to be used over three years for the purpose of hiring and maintaining school mental health workers for school years 2024, 2025 and 2026. Awards ranged from \$25,150 to \$120,000 in each of the first two years and 70 percent of that amount in year three in accordance with the statute.

This grant was highly competitive, with 109 districts submitting completed proposals. Priority was given to districts with a high ratio of students to school mental health workers and a high rate of student use of school mental health services, as defined in [Public Act 23-167](#). Additional consideration was granted for districts with greater than 40 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals and town populations less than 13,000. The applications were

scored by two independent reviewers using a 66-point scoring rubric. The rubric measured the merit of the applications in three primary areas:

- 1) District needs assessment of the number of students and level of student social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs;
- 2) Existing number of school mental health workers on staff; and
- 3) An aligned budget describing the effective and efficient use of funds.

Requested Position Counts:

Positions – Full time and Part time	Expected Count
Social Workers	33
School Psychologist	7
Trauma Specialist	3
Registered Behavior Technicians	10
Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)	15
Licensed Professional Counselors	20
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists	1
Contracted Services	6
Total Requested Positions/contracted services	95

Positions hired to date:

Positions – Full time and Part time	Count
Social Workers	31
School Psychologists	4
Trauma Specialists	-
Registered Behavior Technicians	21
Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)	11
Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors	16
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists	-
Contracted Services	8
Total Positions	83

(November 2024)

Program Expenditures

The Program funding operates on a reimbursement basis. School districts submit fund requests as needed to reimburse the district for costs incurred to support positions. Allowable costs include salary and fringe benefit outlays as well as minor amounts to support necessary supplies for the position (i.e., computer). The CSDE has provided \$3,978,655.00 in reimbursement funding as of November 2024.

School Mental Health Specialist Grant Program				
New Staffing School Year - 2023-24				
District	Student Enrollment	New Position	Number of Students Served by New Position	Average Caseload per Position
Andover School District	241	School Psychologist (contracted services)	241	19
Ansonia School District	2,400	Social Worker	300	30
Area Cooperative Educational Services	1,393	Social Worker	325	250
Bloomfield School District	1,982	Social Worker	248	248
Bozrah School District	170	Registered Behavior Technician and Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (contracted services)	7	7
Bristol School District	7,784	Registered Behavior Technicians (2)	40	40
Brooklyn School District	847	Social Worker	141	20
Canterbury School District	473	Registered Behavior Technician	300	8
Canton School District	1,528	Social Worker	340	40
Cheshire School District	4,267	Counselor	266	25
Columbia School District	475	Social Worker	237	35
Common Ground High School District	223	Social Worker .5 Counselor	74	74
Coventry School District	1,632	Registered Behavior Technician	816	12

Cromwell School District	1,927	Anticipated Social Worker (FY25)	481	30
Darien School District	4,681	Counselor	334	334
East Lyme School District	2,347	School Psychologist	94	35
East Windsor School District	1,048	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	524	30
Easton School District	903	Counselor	451	330
Ellington School District	2,422	Social Worker	1211	30
Fairfield School District	9,356	Social Worker	492	45
Granby School District	1,738	Counselor	289	185
Great Oaks Charter School District	659	Social Worker	330	330
Groton School District	4,104	Early Childhood Social Worker	342	16
Highville Charter School District	504	Social Worker	252	20
Integrated Day Charter School District	263	Counselor	50	20
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communications School District	328	Counselor	328	328
Jumoke Academy School District	598	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and Registered Behavior Technician (contracted services)	398	12
Killingly School District	2,351	Registered Behavior Technician	588	4
Lebanon School District	962	Social Worker	321	25
Ledyard School District	2,430	Social Worker	347	20
Madison School District	2,429	Counselor	209	160
Marlborough School District	452	Registered Behavior Technicians (2)	90	8
Montville School District	1,972	Social Worker	329	31
New Hartford School District	445	Registered Behavior Technician	445	5
Newington School District	3,893	Counselor	285	178
Norwich Free Academy School District	2,071	Social Worker	334	334

Old Saybrook School District	1,070	Registered Behavior Technician	89	3
Orange School District	1,281	Social Worker	600	90
Plainfield School District	1,880	Counselor	235	150
Putnam School District	1,185	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	89	35
Redding School District	864	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	432	19
Regional School District 05	2,077	Social Worker	519	25
Regional School District 06	848	Counselor (contracted services)	471	471
Regional School District 10	2,115	Registered Behavior Technician	62	4
Regional School District 13	1,351	Social Worker	98	35
Regional School District 14	1,563	Registered Behavior Technicians (2)	87	2
Regional School District 19	1,126	School Psychologist	1,126	60
Scotland School District	103	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (contracted services)	103	-
Shelton School District	4,512	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	1,504	20
Sherman School District	265	Social Worker	84	30
Simsbury School District	4,125	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	1,031	40
Sterling School District	315	Counselor	315	315
Stonington School District	1,762	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	1,762	-
Stratford School District	6,789	Social Worker	323	45
Suffield School District	2,041	Registered Behavior Technician	2,041	8
The Bridge Academy Charter School District	280	Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (contracted services)	112	20
The Gilbert School District	435	Social Worker	145	70
The Woodstock Academy School District	975	Counselor	108	65

Thompson School District	885	Counselor	443	443
Tolland School District	2,210	Social Worker	737	737
Vernon School District	3,148	Social Worker	107	75
Voluntown School District	216	Social Worker	43	10
Wallingford School District	5,275	School Psychologist (contracted Services)	293	59
Waterbury School District	18,956	Counselors (2)	318	318
Westbrook School District	597	Social Worker	299	299
Wethersfield School District	3,584	Social Worker	325	35
Willington School District	409	Social Worker	35	35
Wilton School District	3,791	Social Worker	758	30
Winchester School District	481	Board Certified Behavior Analyst	160	57
Windham School District	3,230	Social Worker	175	173
Windsor Locks School District	1,446	Social Worker	241	22

Award Recipients List:

ARPA School Mental Health Specialist Grant Successful Applications 2024-2026				
Lead Applicant	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2024	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2025	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2026 (70 percent)	Total Grant Award
Andover School District	\$ 43,750.00	\$ 43,750.00	\$ 30,625.00	\$ 118,125.00
Ansonia School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Area Cooperative Educational Services	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Bloomfield School District	\$ 88,422.03	\$ 88,422.03	\$ 61,895.42	\$ 238,739.48
Bozrah School District	\$ 81,585.00	\$ 81,585.00	\$ 57,109.50	\$ 220,279.50
Bristol School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Brooklyn School District	\$ 53,641.00	\$ 53,641.00	\$ 37,548.70	\$ 144,830.70
Canterbury School District	\$ 59,517.91	\$ 59,517.91	\$ 41,662.53	\$ 160,698.34
Canton School District	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 28,000.00	\$ 108,000.00
Cheshire School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Columbia School District	\$ 62,000.00	\$ 62,000.00	\$ 43,400.00	\$ 167,400.00
Common Ground High School District	\$ 88,562.00	\$ 88,562.00	\$ 61,993.40	\$ 239,117.40
Coventry School District	\$ 45,815.00	\$ 45,815.00	\$ 32,070.50	\$ 123,700.50
Cromwell School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Darien School District	\$ 47,020.00	\$ 47,020.00	\$ 32,914.00	\$ 126,954.00
East Lyme School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
East Windsor School District	\$ 46,869.00	\$ 46,869.00	\$ 32,808.30	\$ 126,546.30
Easton School District	\$ 62,500.00	\$ 62,500.00	\$ 43,750.00	\$ 168,750.00
Ellington School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Fairfield School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Granby School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00

Great Oaks Charter School District	\$ 90,732.00	\$ 90,732.00	\$ 63,512.40	\$ 244,976.40
Groton School District	\$ 86,000.00	\$ 86,000.00	\$ 60,200.00	\$ 232,200.00
Highville Charter School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Integrated Day Charter School District	\$ 71,500.00	\$ 71,500.00	\$ 50,050.00	\$ 193,050.00
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communications School District	\$ 110,337.00	\$ 110,337.00	\$ 77,235.90	\$ 297,909.90
Jumoke Academy School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Killingly School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Lebanon School District	\$ 77,694.14	\$ 77,694.14	\$ 54,385.90	\$ 209,774.18
Ledyard School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Madison School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Marlborough School District	\$ 65,743.60	\$ 65,743.60	\$ 46,020.52	\$ 177,507.72
Montville School District	\$ 85,448.00	\$ 85,448.00	\$ 59,813.60	\$ 230,709.60
New Hartford School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Newington School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Norwich Free Academy School District	\$ 49,406.50	\$ 49,406.50	\$ 34,584.55	\$ 133,397.55
Old Saybrook School District	\$ 70,012.00	\$ 70,012.00	\$ 49,008.40	\$ 189,032.40
Orange School District	\$ 92,505.00	\$ 92,505.00	\$ 64,753.50	\$ 249,763.50
Plainfield School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Putnam School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Redding School District	\$ 85,600.00	\$ 85,600.00	\$ 59,920.00	\$ 231,120.00
Regional School District 05	\$ 68,211.00	\$ 68,211.00	\$ 47,747.70	\$ 184,169.70
Regional School District 06	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Regional School District 10	\$ 42,187.50	\$ 42,187.50	\$ 29,531.25	\$ 113,906.25
Regional School District 13	\$ 110,500.00	\$ 110,500.00	\$ 77,350.00	\$ 298,350.00
Regional School District 14	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Regional School District 19	\$ 61,052.00	\$ 61,052.00	\$ 42,736.40	\$ 164,840.40

Scotland School District	\$ 89,000.00	\$ 89,000.00	\$ 62,300.00	\$ 240,300.00
Shelton School District	\$ 87,411.00	\$ 87,411.00	\$ 61,187.70	\$ 236,009.70
Sherman School District	\$ 71,789.86	\$ 71,789.86	\$ 50,252.90	\$ 193,832.62
Simsbury School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Sterling School District	\$ 103,460.00	\$ 103,460.00	\$ 72,422.00	\$ 279,342.00
Stonington School District	\$ 42,500.00	\$ 42,500.00	\$ 29,750.00	\$ 114,750.00
Stratford School District	\$ 46,267.00	\$ 46,267.00	\$ 32,386.90	\$ 124,920.90
Suffield School District	\$ 67,664.00	\$ 67,664.00	\$ 47,364.80	\$ 182,692.80
The Bridge Academy Charter School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
The Gilbert School District	\$ 119,160.00	\$ 119,160.00	\$ 83,412.00	\$ 321,732.00
The Woodstock Academy School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Thompson School District	\$ 118,461.00	\$ 118,461.00	\$ 82,922.70	\$ 319,844.70
Tolland School District	\$ 61,256.00	\$ 61,256.00	\$ 42,879.20	\$ 165,391.20
Vernon School District	\$ 119,631.00	\$ 119,631.00	\$ 83,741.70	\$ 323,003.70
Voluntown School District	\$ 25,150.00	\$ 25,150.00	\$ 17,605.00	\$ 67,905.00
Wallingford School District	\$ 39,448.00	\$ 39,448.00	\$ 27,613.60	\$ 106,509.60
Waterbury School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Westbrook School District	\$ 78,000.00	\$ 78,000.00	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 210,600.00
Wethersfield School District	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 84,000.00	\$ 324,000.00
Willington School District	\$ 80,373.00	\$ 80,373.00	\$ 56,261.10	\$ 217,007.10
Wilton School District	\$ 115,963.68	\$ 115,963.68	\$ 81,174.58	\$ 313,101.94
Winchester School District	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 49,000.00	\$ 189,000.00
Windham School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00
Windsor Locks School District	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 162,000.00

Grant Impact Summary

The ARPA School Mental Health Specialist Grant Program has made a substantial positive impact on student well-being, school climate, and community engagement. The addition of mental health specialists, such as school social workers, school psychologists, board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) and registered behavior technicians (RBT) has significantly improved student support across the various schools. These positions have helped in the following ways:

1. **Reducing Caseloads & Improving Access:** Increased staffing has lowered mental health professionals' caseloads, allowing more timely and comprehensive support for students. This has eliminated waiting lists for counseling services and expanded access to individualized support.
2. **Enhancing Early Intervention & Specialized Support:** Staff additions have facilitated early identification and intervention for mental health and behavioral issues, especially in early childhood and specialized programs. Behavior analysts, social workers, and registered behavior technicians (RBT) provide targeted strategies that prevent issues from escalating, reducing disciplinary incidents and promoting classroom engagement.
3. **Supporting Student Resilience & Academic Success:** Mental health professionals and social workers offer vital counseling, academic, and social-emotional support, helping students build resilience, improve attendance, and succeed academically. The addition of resources like a wellness center, provides accessible spaces for students to manage emotional challenges.
4. **Crisis & Family Support:** Staff members have been essential in crisis intervention, supporting students and families through trauma, grief, and behavioral crises. Social workers conduct risk assessments and connect families to community resources, fostering holistic well-being.
5. **Professional Development & Teacher Collaboration:** The grant has enabled trauma-informed training and collaboration with teachers, equipping staff to address behavioral and emotional needs in the classroom and create a positive, supportive school climate.
6. **Community Engagement & Specialized Programs:** Increased connections with community resources and programs like Wellness Week have promoted broader health and safety awareness. Specialized programming and support for marginalized groups contribute to an inclusive environment and strengthen community trust.

Overall, the addition of these roles has fostered a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach to mental health, contributing to improved attendance, engagement, and resilience among students, and a more empathetic school environment.

District Reports

Andover School District: *Doubling the availability of a psychologist from one and a half days per week has been invaluable. This added support helps manage behavioral issues more effectively, allowing students to stay in regular classrooms while providing teachers with strategies to manage classroom dynamics.*

Ansonia School District: *The new School Mental Health Specialist has made a meaningful impact by working directly with students to assess their individual situations and needs. They develop tailored plans to help students reach their personal and academic goals, providing crucial support for those facing difficult challenges, such as trauma, poverty, family incarceration, or substance abuse at home. The specialist also connects students with additional specialists and community resources when needed, ensuring a comprehensive support system. By closely monitoring each student's progress and regularly meeting with teachers and communicating with families, they ensure a collaborative approach. The specialist is a strong advocate for students, offering vital guidance and access to community resources to support their well-being and success.*

Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES): *Adding an additional social worker at Wintergreen School had a significant impact. The entire team benefited from reduced caseloads and an increase in social-emotional learning (SEL) classes. When this team member left for a new position, the impact was immediately felt, prompting a quick search for a replacement to ensure the right fit. Having a qualified social worker teaching SEL skills has been an invaluable asset to the school.*

This additional team member's expertise in mental health allowed for early identification and intervention, addressing potential issues before they escalated. They also engaged families to promote a consistent approach to SEL both at home and at school, providing individualized support to students facing specific challenges and managing crises when needed. By helping students learn emotional regulation, the social worker created a better learning environment, which ultimately led to improved academic outcomes.

Bozrah School District: *By adding a registered behavior technician (RBT) and increasing the hours of our board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA), we successfully transitioned an outplaced student back into the district. This expansion of staff capacity has strengthened our ability to support students' needs within the district.*

Bristol School District: *The behavior technicians have been a support for students in need of immediate tiered levels of intervention.*

Brooklyn School District: *The addition of a new social worker has significantly enhanced support in our elementary school. With her help, we're able to offer more social opportunities, such as*

Lunch Bunch groups, and provide expanded social-emotional support through a push-in model for our younger students. She also offers essential support for students in crisis, allowing our special education teachers to deliver consistent services with minimal disruptions.

Canterbury School District: *The addition of the registered behavior technician (RBT) was extremely beneficial. She worked directly with our special education program for students exhibiting challenging behaviors. The RBT assisted in developing behavioral guidelines and more extensive systems of reinforcement. She observed the implementation of behavior plans and provided feedback to staff. The RBT also provided direct student support to assist students to regulate their emotions. This level of support is desperately needed in our schools at this time.*

Canton School District: *The School Mental Health Specialist Grant allowed the district to expand staffing for certified social workers in conjunction with the district's focus on supporting mental health and the launch of the Thrive program across the district. The added social worker provided direct instruction and support to students regarding goal setting, problem solving, and resilience while also providing support in specialized pathways for students and in conjunction with staff.*

Cheshire School District: *The school counselor has been able to deliver lessons in classrooms, reaching more students and addressing Tier 1 needs. Additional groups have been developed to support specific needs. Collaboration with general education in the support of social emotional and behavioral needs is taking place.*

Columbia School District: *Adding a second school social worker has been incredibly beneficial, allowing us to meet the needs of many more students.*

Coventry School District: *Although it took time to hire, adding a registered behavior analyst (RBT) to our staff has helped provide services to students with high needs and they have also provided support to the district board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA).*

Cromwell School District: *Due to challenges with hiring, funds will be allocated to a new social worker position in the 2024-25 school year.*

Darien School District: *In the spring of 2022, our district experienced the tragic loss of two high school students to suicide. These events underscored the urgent need to enhance resilience building and provide vulnerable students with robust support systems, both within the school and the broader community. Thanks to the grant, we have been able to staff our Wellness Center throughout the entire school day, rather than intermittently.*

The Wellness Center is a technology-free space that has become a sanctuary for students. It has allowed young people the opportunity to practice the skills needed to engage with others face-to-face without reliance on their phones. It hosts a variety of activities and workshops, including Wellness Week, which featured mindfulness sessions led by internal staff and external clinicians,

therapy animals, and strategies to manage stress during critical times like exams. The Center has also served as a refuge during difficult periods, such as the anniversaries of student losses or the recent passing of another student.

Under the supervision of the Wellness Coordinator, the Center facilitates meaningful interpersonal interactions. Student requests are considered, with activities ranging from viewing favorite sporting events or concerts to organizing gatherings in the school quad. Additionally, workshops on topics such as Safe Driving, conducted by the school resource officer, and mental health discussions for student athletes have been offered.

To address the diverse needs of the Darien High School population, the Wellness Coordinator has engaged in outreach to staff, sharing strategies to support students and integrating Wellness Center resources into health classes. The consistent presence of the coordinator has provided students with a reliable adult to connect with. Many students have opened up about their personal challenges, and when appropriate, they have been referred to other resources within the building, such as guidance counselors, Teen Talk, the Connections Counselor, and assistant principals.

The Wellness Coordinator has also promoted teacher-student connections by encouraging teachers to lead workshops, including guided meditation sessions. Furthermore, she played a key role in organizing the district's second annual Out of the Darkness Walk in April and in facilitating a Wellness Week focused on various student wellness topics.

East Lyme School District: *The school psychologist we hired was placed at the high school level. She was able to provide services for special education students in need of coping skills, social skills, and supports around executive functioning. Having a third school psychologist also made our other two school psychologists available for direct counseling as the testing and evaluation caseload could be shared between three professionals rather than two. This work directly supported our students access to the curriculum, improved attendance for some and provided an additional trusted adult in the environment.*

East Windsor School District: *The board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) became certified as a Physical Management Training (PMT) trainer and was able to train over 50 staff (both certified and non-certified). The BCBA also conducted Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and Positive Behavior Support Plans for at least 30 students. The BCBA also provided mandated consultation services to two of our Autism programs in district. The BCBA was a member of our elementary school Response Team.*

Easton School District: *The school counselor at Helen Keller Middle School has been an essential member of the mental health team, helping to maintain strong in-district support for students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Thanks to this counselor's work, the school has avoided increasing the number of students requiring out-of-district placements, even as the number of students with significant needs has grown. One student, who struggled during the*

2023-24 school year and was initially referred for therapeutic out-of-district placement, will be able to remain in-district next year due to the effective counseling supports in place. Having this school counselor on the mental health team ensures that the school is well-staffed with specialists who can provide the counseling and support necessary to meet students' needs.

Ellington School District: *Our new social worker has been instrumental in supporting students in our Before and After School Extended Services (BASES) program, an off-site special education school. With enrollment in the program increasing, she has been actively working with both students and their families. Additionally, she provides support to students in our Students Achieving for Excellence (SAFE) and Police Activity League (PAL) programs, offering targeted interventions to help students succeed and potentially avoid enrollment in the BASES program.*

Fairfield School District: *We are now able to offer both essential and proactive support services to students and their families.*

Granby School District: *The School Mental Health Specialist plays a key role in supporting mental health including leading the restorative practices, attendance and school engagement work.*

Groton School District: *The early childhood social worker (ECSW) supports preschool, Kindergarten, Pre-Kindergarten, transitional Kindergarten, and special education teachers, as well as approximately 600 students. In the 2023-24 school year, 235 students were enrolled in nine preschool/PreK classrooms. The ECSW offers consultation to teachers, conducts classroom observations, assists in developing behavior plans, and helps connect families to outside agencies when necessary. During her weekly classroom visits, she models social skills, manages conflict resolution and challenging behaviors, and leads Second Step lessons.*

Highville Charter School District: *Adding a new School Mental Health Specialist to our district has greatly enhanced our ability to provide comprehensive mental health support, especially for our youngest learners in PreK-3 and PreK-4. Previously, mental health resources were focused on older students, limiting early intervention for younger children. With this expanded team, we can now proactively identify and address mental health and social-emotional needs at an early age, tackling emerging issues like anxiety, behavioral challenges, and emotional regulation before they escalate. This early intervention not only supports individual children but also fosters a healthier, more supportive classroom environment, boosting academic readiness and social integration for all.*

Integrated Day Charter School District: *The impact of the new School Mental Health Specialist has been game changing. Our 7th and 8th grade students, who have struggled the most with mental health, have been able to have access to the school counselor as needed. She has been exceptional with them.*

Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication School District (ISAAC): *The school counselor interacted with all students, from orienting and supporting new incoming 6th graders, to*

encouraging 7th graders as they begin developing plans beyond their current grade, to navigating the transition to high school with 8th graders. Specifically, in year one, the school counselor was closely involved in mediation and conflict resolution between students and with parents; was a key member of ISAAC's Scientific Research-based Interventions (SRBI) team; acted as high school liaison and worked with students to navigate high school choices within the region; and was involved in student recruitment efforts. Additionally, the school counselor was responsible for all Section 504 support services.

Jumoke Academy School District: *My People Clinical Services (contractor) has profoundly impacted the overall well-being and academic success of our Jumoke Academy scholars. Their presence has not only provided a safe and confidential space for our scholars, but they have addressed a supportive environment where the scholar's mental health is openly discussed and prioritized. By addressing issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, self-awareness and positive relationship building, My People Clinical Services has helped the scholars learn strategies that will assist in better management of their mental health. This support has been crucial for our scholars facing personal challenges. Furthermore, the various mental health initiatives that have been implemented have educated the scholars, staff and families about the importance of mental health and reducing stigma among their peers.*

Killingly School District: *Implementing social emotional paraprofessional support has had a great impact on our students. We will continue to determine what makes the most sense for staffing to support the needs of the students.*

Lebanon School District: *The new social worker was able to be full time at our elementary school. He could devote time to students and families in crisis and needing supports. He also is a full-time member of the support team along with our school psychologist. He provides intervention to students identified as in need through Devereau Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) screening. He also supports our behavioral supports classroom. Being at the elementary school five days a week provides the students, parents, and staff with stability and support.*

Ledyard School District: *The addition of a new social worker has increased our ability to provide a smaller student to staff ratio for our mental health providers.*

Madison School District: *With the addition of a second K-3 school counselor, we were able to better support our K-3 students social emotional concerns. The new counselor proactively addressed mental health concerns by pushing into the K-3 classrooms on a regular basis to teach lessons from our wellness curriculum. The new counselor also provided timely and targeted interventions to students, provided weekly counseling sessions for students and ran Lunch Bunches targeting the development of skills (communication, building of relationships, identifying their feelings and how those feelings influence their behavior). As a result of the services provided by this position, the school climate has been positively affected and the K-3 students are better prepared to effectively handle the challenges and stressors in everyday life.*

Marlborough School District: *The addition of two registered behavior technicians (RBT) to Marlborough Elementary School has had a profoundly positive impact on both the students and the school as a whole. The RBTs provided support throughout our PreK-6 building, addressing students' needs in a proactive and preventative manner. Their presence significantly reduced the frequency of challenging behaviors and behavioral incidents.*

One student in particular demonstrated remarkable progress, with a significant decrease in both physical incidents and self-injurious behaviors. The RBTs worked collaboratively with our board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) to design and implement effective behavior and incentive plans, benefiting many students. This collaborative approach has strengthened our programming and created a more supportive environment for students across the school. We are excited to build on these successes in the upcoming school year.

Montville School District: *The addition of a full-time social worker at Oakdale Elementary School has significantly enhanced our ability to support students. Previously, we relied on two social workers who visited twice a week from other elementary schools in the district. This arrangement often left students waiting a week for sessions or meeting with unfamiliar staff during urgent situations, leading to gaps in care. Now, with a dedicated social worker available five days a week, students have consistent access to someone they trust, ensuring they receive timely and personalized support.*

In our preschool classrooms, the social worker addresses the social and emotional needs of young children while connecting families with vital resources. This early intervention helps build a stable foundation for both students and their families. For students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, or those needing informal support, she manages her own caseload, alleviating the workload of our school psychologist and allowing them to focus on other critical tasks.

The social worker's role on the crisis team has been invaluable. Her daily presence ensures that students in crisis receive immediate assistance from someone they know, providing a sense of stability during difficult times. Additionally, as a member of the attendance team, she works with students and families to develop strong attendance habits and address issues contributing to chronic absenteeism.

Overall, the addition of the school social worker has brought consistent, reliable support to our students, reduced the burden on other staff, and strengthened our school community's ability to meet the needs of all learners. Her presence has become an essential asset to our school.

New Hartford School District: *The registered behavior technician (RBT) has supported some of our most behaviorally challenging students. They work directly with our contracted board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) to support behavior plans. The RBT has also helped support the special education teachers and the school psychologist with data collection.*

Newington School District: *The addition of this counselor has had a profound impact across three of our schools, with the greatest impact seen at the high school. The number of students repeatedly using drugs on campus has dropped significantly. She teaches two sections of a credit-bearing mental health class, which will expand to four sections per semester by the 2025-26 school year.*

Her role encompasses providing mental health support, drug awareness education, drug and nicotine cessation programs, and crisis intervention. She works closely with families and Newington Human Services, assisting with referrals to external resources as needed. Additionally, she has initiated a drug awareness program for 8th Grade students at both middle schools to help prepare them for the transition to high school. Her contributions have been instrumental in fostering a healthier, more supportive school environment.

Norwich Free Academy School District: *Norwich Free Academy is utilizing the School Mental Health Grant to fund a much-needed counselor position that would otherwise be beyond our financial reach. This counselor plays a vital role in supporting our Multilingual Learner population and addressing the ongoing mental health challenges students are facing in the aftermath of the pandemic. Their contributions are essential to fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment where all students can thrive.*

Old Saybrook School District: *The hiring of a behavior specialist (registered behavior technician (RBT)) has allowed us to effectively utilize consultants for both acute evaluations and long-term support for students with behavioral challenges. This has greatly improved our ability to address immediate needs and provide sustained assistance to help students succeed.*

Orange School District: *The addition of a second social worker has greatly improved the district's ability to provide comprehensive support for students and families. Previously, a single social worker was responsible for four buildings, which limited the capacity to deliver consistent services. Now, with one social worker assigned to every two buildings, there is more time and focus available to meet the unique needs of each school community.*

The social workers play a vital role in supporting students' academic, emotional, and social development. They oversee the Primary Project grant, which focuses on early intervention, and manage the planning and implementation of Section 504 plans. They provide counseling for students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, and Scientific Research-based Interventions (SRBI)/Tier interventions, as well as for general education students who may benefit from additional social-emotional support. Counseling services include individual and group sessions, social-emotional learning (SEL) programming, and Check-In/Check-Out systems.

Beyond direct student support, the social workers collaborate with families through community outreach, parent referrals, and coordination of after-school services funded by grants. They assist in crisis management, conduct restorative circles and mediations, and deliver Second Step

and SEL lessons to foster social-emotional learning. Additionally, they organize resources for families in need, such as holiday assistance programs, and serve on the district's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) team to promote positive behavior strategies.

By managing their own caseloads and attending team meetings for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 plans, and student evaluations, the social workers ensure that all students receive the individualized attention they need. Their efforts have also extended to supervising masters-level social work interns, further expanding counseling services within the district. Overall, the addition of a second social worker has been instrumental in creating a more supportive environment for students, families, and staff across the district.

Plainfield School District: *The grant has had a significant impact by helping to fund a portion of a guidance counselor's salary. This support has ensured the continuation of vital services for students, including academic guidance, social-emotional support, and assistance with college and career planning, all of which contribute to their overall well-being and success.*

Putnam School District: *The board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) plays a critical role in supporting staff and students across all three school buildings, as well as our Transition program. Her responsibilities include conducting student observations, consulting with staff, supervising and collaborating with registered behavior technicians (RBT), completing Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs), collecting and analyzing data, and improving behavior management protocols.*

She has also initiated bi-weekly training sessions for staff working in specialized programs and has begun leading professional development sessions for district staff. These efforts have strengthened team collaboration and improved support systems, resulting in a measurable decrease in the use of restraint and seclusion from the 2022-23 school year to the 2023-24 school year.

Redding School District: *The middle school social worker provides essential support for some of the school's most emotionally fragile and behaviorally challenged students. Her role includes delivering direct counseling services, both individually and in groups, as well as offering indirect support through consultation with interdisciplinary teams and parent training.*

Thanks to her expertise, the district has been able to maintain the placement of emotionally disabled students in the public middle school, avoiding the need for out-of-district placements in therapeutic settings. Additionally, she conducts social developmental histories as part of student assessments, which enhance the district's ability to accurately determine eligibility for special education services and inform effective classroom strategies to meet individual student needs.

As a key member of both the middle school crisis intervention team and the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) team, the social worker has contributed to maintaining low levels of office referrals for significant behavioral issues. Notably, during both the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school

years, the district successfully supported all students with significant anxiety, ensuring no students required home instruction due to this challenge.

Regional School District 05: *This position focused on school engagement. We were able to increase the number of home visits conducted, create and implement a district wide student attendance review board, conduct and implement school refusal/avoidance Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and based on embargoed EdSight data, improve our district attendance numbers as compared to 22-23 school year numbers.*

Regional School District 06: (Now Region 20) *During the 2023-2024 school year, Greenwood's school-based clinicians expanded their mental health services from Wamogo High School to include elementary schools in Region 6. The team, consisting of Lindsay Farmer, PhD, Josh Cocsia, LPCA, and Jennifer Roscher, MFTA, collaborated with school staff—including counselors, social workers, teachers, and administrators—to provide critical mental health services to students who might not otherwise have access to therapy.*

A significant portion of Greenwood's clients came from low-income and rural households, where barriers such as transportation challenges and lack of work flexibility prevent access to traditional therapy. By the end of the school year, the program had served 78 students and their families—roughly 20 percent of Wamogo's student population, delivering over 800 counseling sessions.

Greenwood's clinicians addressed a range of challenges, including anxiety, depression, trauma, substance abuse, self-harm, suicidal ideation, attention difficulties, and eating disorders. In light of the national youth mental health crisis and lingering effects of pandemic-related isolation, these services filled critical gaps beyond what school counselors and social workers could provide. Clinicians offered supplementary, long-term care, often meeting with students multiple times a week, and worked closely with families and external healthcare providers. This multidisciplinary approach, which included coordination with doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists, enabled comprehensive care and interventions that extended beyond the school's capacity.

Post-pandemic, there has been a marked increase in anxiety-related school avoidance, manifesting in disruptive behaviors and somatic symptoms such as headaches, nausea, and dizziness. While school staff could recognize anxiety as a root cause, Greenwood's clinicians employed a multidisciplinary approach to rule out other diagnoses and design tailored interventions. They also focused on fostering social connectedness for students with social anxiety by linking them to community activities and worked with parents on strategies to promote healthy habits, such as encouraging pro-social activities, limiting screen time, and improving sleep hygiene.

The Greenwood's Youth Mental Health Program has made a transformative impact on the Region 6 school community. By addressing the complex mental health needs of students and their families, the program has not only supported academic success but also fostered resilience

and well-being in the face of ongoing challenges. This comprehensive approach underscores the importance of integrating multidisciplinary mental health services into school settings to meet the growing needs of today's youth.

Regional School District 10: *The increase in registered behavior technicians (RBT) has allowed the district to provide more intensive, appropriate mental health services to students with significant behavioral needs. These students have been able to show a decrease in student referrals, an increase in on-task time, an increase in time within the general education environment and an increase in time with non-disabled peers. We have been able to return seven students to district from approved private special education programs (APSEP) placements.*

Regional School District 13: *District 13 counseling staff is seeing approximately 30 percent of our entire population on a regularly scheduled basis. The increase in mental health needs is acute and significantly impact children's ability to access the curriculum. The level of significant mental health concerns at all developmental levels is at an all time high. Our mental health specialist has been an integral part of our counseling team in providing tiered supports to ALL our students, families and staff in district.*

This position has enabled us to provide much needed increased supports for students in classrooms, individual counseling, and small group counseling. We have increased our ability to provide consultative and professional learning experiences for staff and families as well.

Regional School District 14: *The district hired two registered behavior technicians (RBT), and their contributions have significantly enhanced student support services. At the middle school, one RBT is leading the implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) program under the guidance of the principal and the board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA). This program promotes positive behaviors and creates a more supportive school environment.*

At the high school, the second RBT provides critical support across the school, focusing on students with behavioral intervention plans and working closely with the SCOPE program. This specialized "school within a school" program is designed to assist students struggling with attendance and managing their overall school experience.

The district is highly satisfied with the addition of these roles and has already observed a meaningful impact on students' behavior and overall school engagement.

Regional School District 19: *The grant money allowed us to fund a second school psychologist.*

Shelton School District: *The addition of a third board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) to the district has provided essential support to several key programs. This BCBA has been instrumental in supporting the Pre-K program, which includes a high number of students with Autism and*

significant behavioral dysregulation. Their expertise has helped address these students' unique needs, creating a more structured and supportive learning environment.

Additionally, the BCBA has been actively involved in the district's Alternative Learning Center at the elementary level, a program specifically designed to educate students with Autism. Their guidance and interventions have enhanced the program's effectiveness, ensuring students receive the tailored support necessary for their success.

Sherman School District: *The social worker has played a crucial role in significantly reducing the school's chronic absenteeism rate. During the 2022-23 school year, the rate stood at 18.6 percent. While the official figures for the 2023-24 school year are not yet available, preliminary data indicates a reduction to approximately 10 percent.*

Beyond addressing attendance issues, the social worker provides extensive support to families in various capacities. She works directly with parents to address school avoidance, offering daily assistance in some cases. For families in need of financial assistance, she helps them complete applications for programs like free and reduced-price lunch and connects them with external organizations that provide financial support.

She has also contributed to the school's sense of community by helping the clinical team organize holiday gift drives for students in need. For students, she provides direct support aligned with their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plans, ensuring they meet their goals and objectives. Additionally, she assists students who require guidance due to temporary or long-term challenges, even if they lack formal legal accommodations.

To extend her impact, the social worker maintains a close partnership with the town's social services department. This collaboration enables her to connect families with additional resources when their needs go beyond what the school can provide, ensuring comprehensive support for the school community.

Simsbury School District: *Our K-12 behavior coordinator has developed a strategic plan for districtwide behavioral supports and improvements. She has also directly supported and impacted our in-district behavior programs - providing behavioral support to those students and their teams. She also worked directly within our Intensive Learning Needs programs and provided direct consultation and support to those programs districtwide.*

Sterling School District: *Sterling is working hard to increase student attendance. The district and school administration with our part time social worker meet weekly to monitor student attendance and review patterns specific to students/families. This includes follow up via phone and in-person home visits. The team has found this to be a daunting task that requires time and staffing to force the lines of communication with families and establish a positive and supportive rapport. It takes time and the right people to build the needed relationships in the community with families. Trained mental health providers such as social workers are better trained to*

understand the complexity of desperate situations that are created by poverty, unemployment and/or mental health disease issues.

Stratford School District: *The new School Mental Health Specialist (SMHS) supported students with the most difficult behaviors through individual and group support. The SMHS was part of the school crisis response team during her three workdays. The SMHS worked with classroom teachers on classroom management to help with student behaviors. The SMHS also provided group mental health lessons in classrooms.*

Suffield School District: *Having a registered behavior technician (RBT) has been incredibly helpful in supporting the needs of our youngest students with behavioral and social/emotional challenges. The RBT works closely with the board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) in implementing behavior plans, providing training to other staff members and providing direct services which allows students to be educated in their home school.*

The Bridge Academy Charter School District: *The board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) has helped us design and implement effective behavior plans for several of our middle school students. This has resulted in fewer disciplinary incidents and more opportunities for learning.*

The Gilbert School District: *We have been able to service more students who need assistance in a timely fashion without having a waiting list of students who need counseling.*

The Woodstock Academy School District: *With the support of this grant, we were able to hire an additional school counselor, significantly enhancing our ability to provide comprehensive support to students and their families.*

Thompson School District: *The ARPA Mental Health Support Grant has had a significant and transformative impact on our school community. With this funding, we have been able to expand our reach, providing essential mental health services to a greater number of students and their families.*

The results have been remarkable: attendance issues, school avoidance, and truancy rates have all significantly decreased. Students who once struggled to engage in their education are now finding stability and support, which has improved their overall well-being and academic participation. This grant has been instrumental in fostering a healthier, more connected school environment where students and families feel supported and empowered to succeed.

Vernon School District: *By hiring this position, it allows Grades 6 through 12 to have both a counselor and a social worker. We only have school counselors at the middle and high school levels. This position allows the opportunity to reduce caseloads of other mental health professionals and frees up more time for them, thus allowing them to expand the services they provide. It has been a great benefit to the district to have this additional social worker.*

Voluntown School District: *The school mental health specialist is essential in providing school-based services that support our students and families who are in need for a variety of reasons. Students on this caseload are provided with counseling support, academic, and emotional strategies so they can be successful. The specialist also works with families to best support their students.*

Wallingford School District: *Although we were unable to hire a specialist for this school year, we have successfully secured one for the upcoming school year.*

Waterbury School District: *The addition of a school counselor has greatly enhanced the delivery of academic, college/career, and social-emotional services in our district, resulting in improved support for students. Through collaboration with administrators, social workers, and teachers, the counselor has strengthened our ability to identify at-risk students and streamline referral systems.*

These efforts have fostered a culture of holistic student wellness, equipping students with essential resilience and stress management skills. The impact has been evident in improved attendance, academic performance, and an overall positive school climate. This role underscores our district's commitment to prioritizing the whole child as a cornerstone of student success.

Wethersfield School District: *Attendance was a primary focus of the social worker's efforts. Monthly data was reviewed to identify students struggling with attendance, and home visits were conducted to collaborate with families in developing supportive plans. Many of these students were facing challenges such as anxiety, depression, school phobia, and other barriers to attendance.*

The social worker provided support in the newly developed Wellness Center, where 1:1 or small group check-ins served as Tier 1 interventions for behavior and attendance. The Wellness Center offered a space for short breaks, helping students regulate before returning to class. On some days, up to 20 students visited the center. The social worker also helped implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) strategies to improve attendance across the school.

In addition, the social worker facilitated small groups addressing shared concerns, including executive functioning, coping skills, anxiety, depression, grief and loss, school phobia, and gender/sexual orientation. Risk assessments were conducted for suicidal ideation, with follow-up counseling and recommendations for outside support provided as needed. The social worker also offered support to gender-fluid youth and their families.

Willington School District: *The impact has been tremendous. The three mental health professionals we had on staff were ready to leave last year because their caseloads were extremely high. Adding the mental health specialist has provided a better balance for our staff, but more importantly, it allows the district to better meet the needs of our students.*

Wilton School District: *We are using this position as a Tier 1 support for teachers, which in turn directly benefits students. The specialist is dedicated to supporting teachers with Tier 1 strategies and group lessons, offering modeling, guidance, and development as needed. The impact is multifaceted: the specialist works with entire grade-level teams to address specific needs identified through our social-emotional learning (SEL) assessments, provides targeted support within classrooms for areas of concern, and offers individualized support for students who require assistance in specific areas. Feedback from teachers who have worked with the specialist has been very positive, and staff are looking forward to increased collaboration and support in the coming year.*

Winchester School District: *This has been a phenomenal support for our district. Given the significant need of our incoming Pre-K classes, we have been able to develop specific programming for our K-2 building while building staff capacity. In addition, the board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) consultants have provided several trainings for our staff. I cannot thank you enough for this support!*

Windham School District: *All students in attendance of both programs (summer school and extended school year (ESY)). This project will meet their needs to further bridge the learning gap exacerbated by the pandemic and corresponding school closures coupled with increased mental health support needs. Windham is a priority school district and receives additional funding through grants for summer programs. In addition, the district sets aside board funds to cover summer programs and the need for these mental health workers beyond the regular school year will be considered a priority by the district and funds will be set aside.*

Windsor Locks School District: *The school mental health specialist has played an important role in supporting our students' mental health, behavioral health, and served as an active member of the crisis intervention team. The social worker has supported students struggling with anxiety, depression, self-harm and other mental health challenges. The social worker provides individual and group counseling and helps students build emotional resilience which has a direct impact on academic performance.*

The social worker has played a pivotal role in times of crisis, such as bullying, trauma, a loss in the family, challenges with addiction, and social, emotional and behavioral regulation challenges. The social worker offers a bridge to outside agencies and internal school supports to help students and families. Having a social worker dedicated to this role has freed the school administrators to focus on teaching and learning and supporting a positive school climate.

Having an additional social worker has allowed the school to be proactive in supporting students. By addressing students' needs early on, the social worker has been able to prevent

problems from escalating which contributes to maintaining a more supportive school community.

The addition of a social worker has also allowed for more in house professional development and consultation to support teachers with trauma informed practices. This has contributed to a positive school climate that promotes empathy and understanding among staff and students.