

**Student Services Report
Wellness and Foster Youth
May 27, 2021**

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Lissette Moore-Guerra, Coordinator for Student Services**

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board of Trustees of district wellness services, including foster youth supports.

Background

On April 8, 2021, the Board affirmed Resolution #21-16, May as *National Foster Care Awareness Month*, and Resolution # 21-17, May as *Mental Health Awareness Month*. The Board requested a report on services for foster youth as well as the district's wellness program.

Overview of Student Services Department

SCUSD recognizes that health and academics are interdependent; therefore, there is a wide range of programs to support every students' wellness needs. These services are offered through the Student Services Department, in collaboration with other district departments and community-based organizations.

In the 2020-21 school year, the Student Services Department was formalized to include a Director of Student Services. Dr. Brenda Carrillo, Director of Student Services, oversees a wide range of student support programs. Currently, the department includes English Language Supports, Enrollment Center, Family Resource Center, Mental Health and Wellness, Attendance and Discipline, as well as Title IX and Uniform Complaint Procedures, Migrant Education, and grant-funded after school programming. The [Student Services Department Organizational Chart](#) (also attached) outlines staff and programs within the department. While all programs within the Student Services Department support student well-being, this report will specifically focus on wellness and foster youth programming.

Wellness Program

SCUSD offers a comprehensive wellness program that includes licensed mental health professionals, licensure track counseling associates, and community health outreach workers. This team is led by Ms. Lissette Moore-Guerra, Student Services Department Coordinator, who oversees two licensed mental health teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA's), Ms. Kathy Marek and Ms. Sabine Reuter.

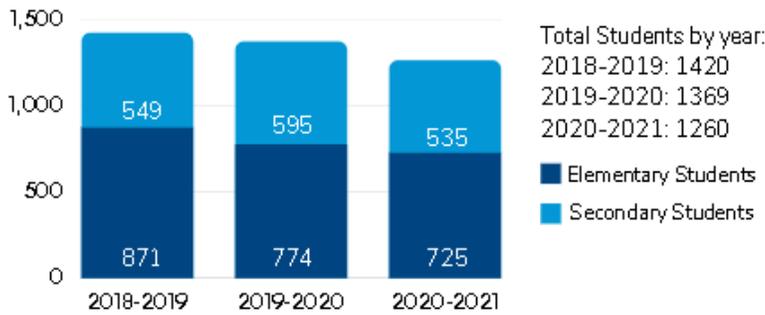
A unique aspect of the mental health and wellness program is the focus on a Wellness Center model. All secondary school sites have a Wellness Center, which provides a safe, supportive environment where students can go to discuss a variety of issues, from depression, anxiety, grief, family life, and managing stressors to dating violence and other psycho-social needs. Through both on-campus programming and community-based partnerships, students receive coordinated health education, assessments, counseling, and other support services to maximize engagement and success.

Wellness Coordinators, Counseling Associates & Community Health Outreach Workers

Each site is staffed with a Wellness Coordinator (WC). WC's are licensed mental health providers who act as primary liaisons between parents, the community, and school sites, and are responsible for the oversight and coordination of site mental health and wellness services. They provide direct services, crisis management, and case consultation, connect families to appropriate services, and clinical supervision to Counseling Associates (CA's). CA's are mental health clinicians working towards their clinical license who serve all sites by providing direct, individual mental health services. They generally work at SCUSD for 1-2 years while they accumulate their required hours and are supervised by Wellness Coordinators. Each High School has a full-time Community Health Outreach Worker (CHOW), who is responsible for staffing the Wellness Center and for pushing wellness services out into the school community. Wellness staff tends to be bicultural and bilingual in various languages.

Figure 1

Total Number of Students Referred to Wellness



Mental Health and Wellness data (Figure 1) indicate that over the past three years, Wellness Teams received 4,049 student referrals for services. This number includes both elementary and secondary students as well as students receiving special education services. This year there was a decrease in referrals, due to the distance learning model which did not fully lend itself to a traditional school counseling model. Students reported challenges participating in counseling, given the lack of privacy, computer fatigue, and overall engagement barriers of online connections. This created a need to shift to group and classroom support.

All referrals are screened by a WC who assesses the level of need and appropriate services. Based on this determination, students may be seen by a WC, referred to an academic counselor, Counseling Associate, or other support staff.

This year 469 students were seen for ongoing individual counseling services. This decrease from 2018-19 (762 students) and 2019-20 (866 students) can be attributed to the distance learning barriers described above. However, while overall individual counseling services declined, there was a significant increase in group counseling and in-class supports provided.

Figure 2

Number of Students Served in Groups, Clubs, Activities

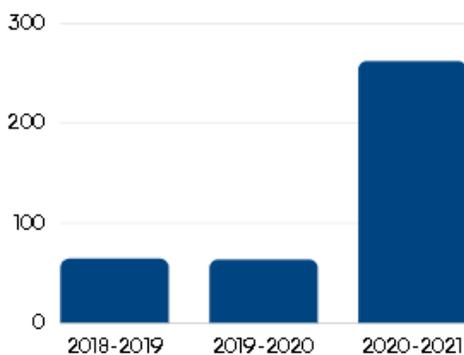


Figure 3

Wellness Center Drop Ins

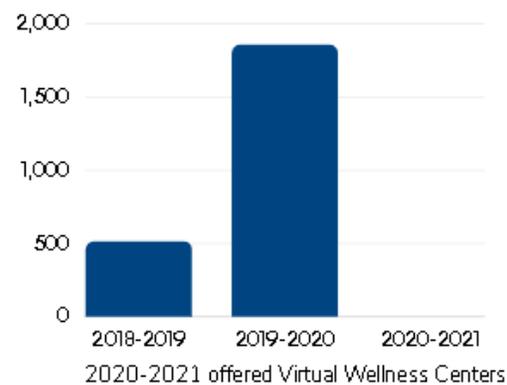


Figure 2 highlights that there has been a significant increase in students served via groups this year. Since less students accessed online counseling, group services served as a main mechanism of support during distance learning. Figure 3 highlights that in 2018-19, 513 students accessed their newly developed Wellness Centers. The following year 2019-20, Wellness Centers were much more utilized as they became established. The increase in access is also because in 2019-20, middle school wellness centers were launched. This year wellness centers have been virtual and therefore data is not available.

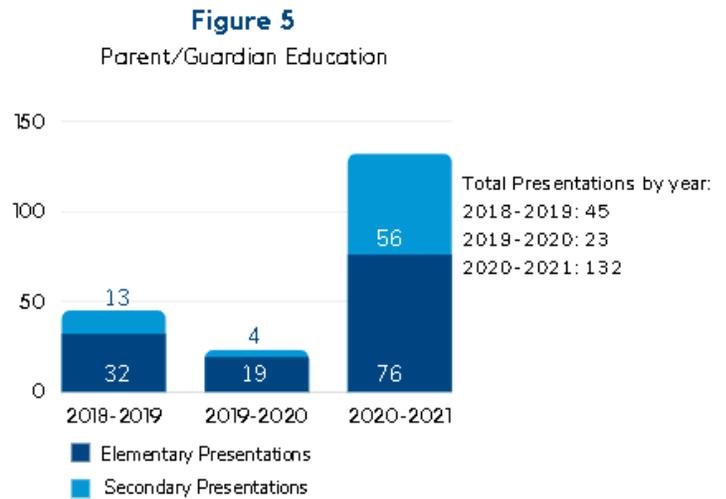
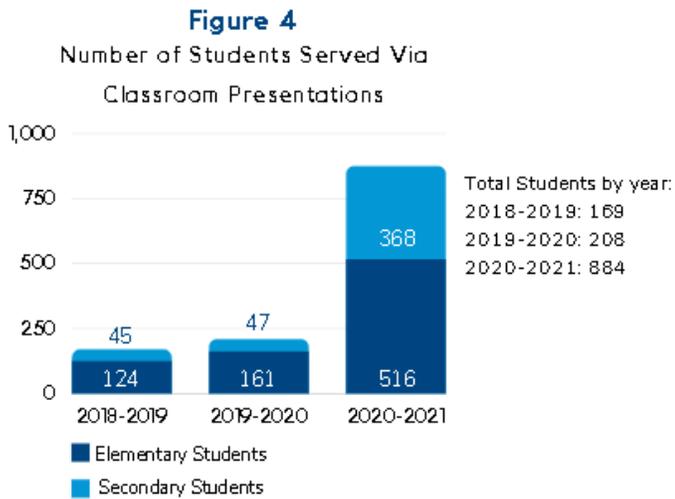


Figure 4 highlights that this year the number of students served via classroom presentations was significantly higher (884 total) compared to previous years. Wellness staff went into classrooms to provide in the moment support, offer social emotional learning and related lessons, and collaborate with teachers. This increase in group support was also true for parent/guardian education. A total of 132 total parents/guardians have been served via wellness presentations this year, compared to 23 last year and 45 the year prior (See Figure 5). This shift in modalities emerged as a way of supporting students and families using more universal interventions. Additionally, there was a shift in the type of parent workshops offered, to focus on Parenting During a Pandemic and Strengthening Relationships, Handling Big Emotions, and Refreshing your Family’s Toolkit. Additionally, in partnership with the Special Education Department, and the Family Resource Center, topics such as How to Avoid Power Struggles and Social Connections were offered.

In addition to mental health workshops, there was an acknowledgment that students continued to need safe and welcoming spaces, with familiar routines (whether online or in-person). Therefore, the district’s Multi-Tiered System of Support-Behavior Coaches, Ms. Christi Tapia, and Ms. Bess Wood provided direct coaching to site teams and teachers, developed social-emotional lessons, and professional learning for teachers, and took a leadership role in the implementation of the district’s MTSS initiative. These efforts helped to promote safe and welcoming learning spaces for students by being explicit about school expectations.

Care Solace

In anticipation of the increased need for easily accessible mental health services, the district contracted with CareSolace for the 2020-21 school year. CareSolace is a 24/7, mental health concierge that provides no-cost referrals for mental health in various languages to SCUSD students, families, and staff.

| Table 1: Number of Students/Families and Staff Served by CareSolace: July 2020-April 2021 | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|---|
| | Inquiries Received | New Cases | Top Reasons for inquiry |
| Students/Families | 1,776 | 279 | 43% anxiety, 42% depression, 28% trauma |
| Staff | 213 | 21 | 67% anxiety, 51% depression, 28% trauma |

CareSolace data (Table 1), highlights that there were 1,766 inquiries (emails/texts/phone calls) made to CareSolace by students and families and 213 inquiries made by staff. Of these, 279 students and 21 staff were engaged in counseling services. The primary reasons for referrals for both groups were anxiety, depression, and trauma. This data matches wellness reasons for referral data.

Data collected from staff, community-based partners, and surveys are used by the Student Services Department to drive programming and support, in addition to assessing program strengths and needs. For example, this year

the following expanded supports were implemented:

- Piloting the Social-Emotional curriculum, Why Try at various sites, to bolster social-emotional learning competencies for secondary students.
- Providing access to Kognito’s Friend2Friend (F2F) to high schools, a virtual student curriculum, supporting core SEL topics by having students practice conversations with peers, and encouraging them to seek mental health support.
- Establishing standing interdepartmental meetings with the Special Education and Counseling Departments to collaborate, share data and resources, and develop tools for teachers and staff.
- Expanding on partnerships with community agencies, such as Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Children’s Health Council, and Gardner Mental Health.
- Collaborating with site point persons, who met regularly with Mr. Rob Griffin, Student Discipline and Attendance Coordinator, to proactively review attendance data, share best practices and monitor attendance and engagement of students.

In recognition that staff also need wellness support, especially amid the various transitions experienced during this pandemic, wellness staff has been responsive to staff needs by providing:

- Professional learning on social-emotional learning and cultivating connections
- Development of a [teacher toolkit](#) with resources on returning to in-person learning
- Referrals to CareSolace/Employee Assistance Programs/other resources
- Monthly tips and guidance on self-care

The Wellness Team continues to implement innovative means to support the needs of the whole child, staff, and parents/guardians. The Wellness Team recognizes that mental health programming will continue to be a high need as students transition back to in-person learning, cope with losses brought on by Covid, and learn to re-engage with one another.

Foster Youth

Students in foster care experience traumatic situations such as abusive or neglectful home conditions, or child exploitation. These students tend to experience greater challenges with academic success and mental health, as well as general wellbeing.

To assist with these needs, SCUSD employs two Spanish-speaking Foster Youth/McKinney Vento Liaisons who work directly with students and families. The liaisons offer services, which include:

- Support for academic achievement, transportation, enrollment, and timely transfer of records
- Encouragement of school attendance to reduce truancy, drop-out rates, and incidents of discipline
- Coordinate support services by communicating with foster youth, teachers, administrators, foster parents, social workers, etc.
- Ensure foster youth receive appropriate safeguards under AB 490 (School Stability and Timely Transfer of Records) and AB 167 (High School Graduation Requirements)
- Refer to programs such as:
 - Pivotal-college students matched with students in foster care to help them create goals, outline tasks, and monitor progress on the identified goals
 - Paper a contracted individualized tutoring service that all SCUSD students have to get homework help, writing feedback, and study support.

Table 2: Number of Foster Youth Enrolled in SCUSD

| Year | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 2018-2019 | 8 (33%) | 16 (67%) | 24 (100%) |
| 2019-2020 | 12 (40%) | 18 (60%) | 30 (100%) |
| 2020-2021 | 17 (51.5%) | 16 (48.5%) | 33 (100%) |

SCUSD currently has 33 students enrolled who are in foster care. Table 2 illustrates that the number of foster youth enrolled in SCUSD has continued to grow slightly over the last three years.

| Table 3: Ethnic Breakdown of Foster Youth Enrolled in SCUSD | | | | |
|--|----------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| Year | Hispanic | Non-Hispanic | Not Disclosed | Total |
| 2018-2019 | 10 (42%) | 13 (54%) | 1 (4%) | 24 |
| 2019-2020 | 18 (60%) | 11 (37%) | 1 (3%) | 30 |
| 2020-2021 | 17 (52%) | 16 (48%) | 0 | 33 |

SCUSD students in foster care tend to be Hispanic (Table 3). In 2019-20 60% identified as Hispanic, and in 2020-21 52% identified as Hispanic. This trend is in line with state data on foster youth.

| Table 4: Enrollment of Foster Youth by Grade Level | | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Year | Elementary | Middle | High | Total |
| 2018-2019 | 5 (24%) | 2 (9.5%) | 14 (66.5%) | 21 |
| 2019-2020 | 6 (22%) | 4 (15%) | 17 (63%) | 27 |
| 2020-2021 | 10 (30.3%) | 7 (21.2%) | 16(48.5%) | 33 |

Data on foster youth by grade level (Table 4) highlights that most SCUSD students in foster care are enrolled in high school, followed by elementary and middle school. According to the California Dashboard for 2018-19, foster youth demonstrate significant need in the area of school attendance, as they show 43% chronic absenteeism. School attendance and engagement is a key focus of work with foster youth.

To address the needs of foster youth, Foster Youth/McKinney Vento Liaisons have weekly contact with families, track student grades and attendance, collaborate closely with site counselors and wellness staff, and prioritize students for programs such as summer school and the Family Resource Center. Additionally, they attend quarterly county foster youth and McKinney-Vento meetings to discuss challenges, successes, and best practices. This year, countywide discussions have centered on finding and engaging foster youth who have had limited participation during distance learning. Staff also meet regularly with the county assigned manager to SCUSD to discuss and plan for the needs of students in foster care.

Conclusion:

Supporting the wellness needs of all students, with a focus on vulnerable students, continues to drive the work of the Student Services Department. Over the last 14 months, the Student Services Department has innovated and pivoted to provide appropriate services to students, families, and staff to mitigate the mental health impact of the pandemic, including the many instances of social injustice that occurred. Looking forward, the Student Services Department is working on the following key initiatives to continue to support student mental health and improve foster youth outcomes:

Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)

Over the last year, the Student Services Department, in collaboration with district leadership, has been leading the development and implementation of a coherent district Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. MTSS supports the fact that students thrive when their behavioral and academic needs are met proactively. MTSS builds educator capacity to provide targeted assistance by clearly articulating tiers of support that are increased based on needs and engaging in ongoing assessment and data collection.

While many sites have been engaged in the development of some MTSS strategies, there is now a shift to both elevate this work and develop an intentional district-wide system. A shift to a tiered model of service provision, with an intentional focus on universal interventions, provides proactive services to benefit each and every student. This shift is also in line with the district's strategic vision.

On May 7, 2021, SCUSD was notified of being a recipient of a three-year grant to support funding for MTSS staffing. The Learning Schools for Community Success Program (LCSSP) grant provides a total of \$83,000 over three years. The funding will be leveraged with district work occurring with WestEd that includes the establishment of a district 3-year MTSS Implementation Plan.

Differentiated Assistance for Foster Youth and McKinney Vento Students

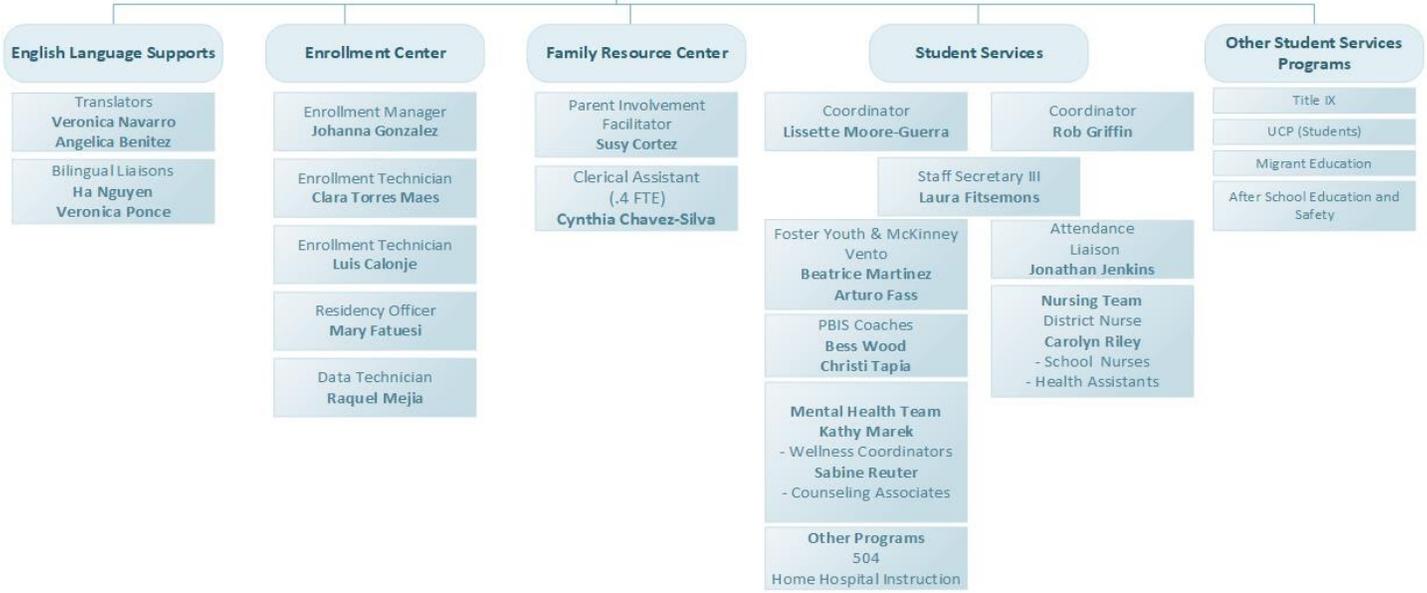
Recently, the district began working with the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) to develop a plan of differentiated assistance for the 103 district students who qualify as homeless, under the McKinney Vento Act. This work was prompted by a review of the 2019 District Dashboard data in which key outcomes for this group of students fell on red indicators. The district determined that including Foster Youth in this work would be beneficial as the goal of this collaborative work with the SCCOE is to focus on building district capacity to sustain improvements and to effectively address disparities in opportunities and outcomes for vulnerable students. A goal of this work will be the development of a plan to better support homeless students and that will be aligned with larger multi-tiered systems of support efforts.

Student Services Organizational Chart



Brenda Carrillo
Director, Student Services

Staff Secretary III
Bethany Charon



Revision:11/9/2020bc