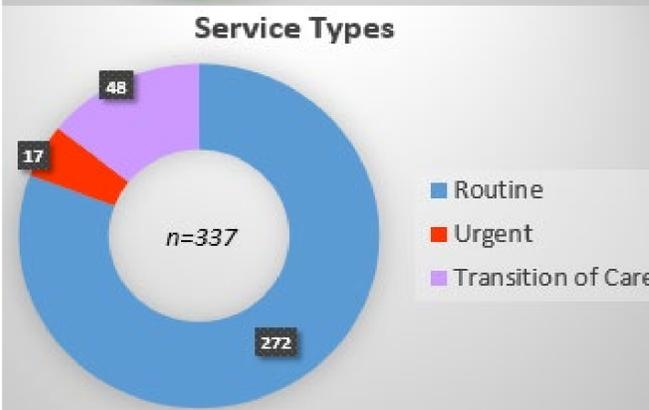
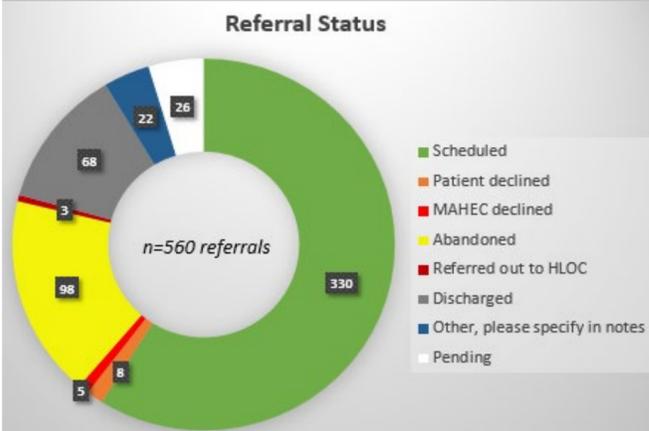
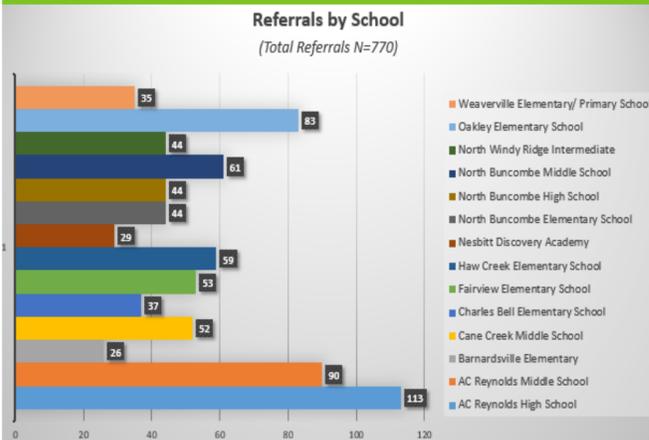


MAHEC School-Based Therapy Services in Buncombe County Schools: August 2021- June 2022

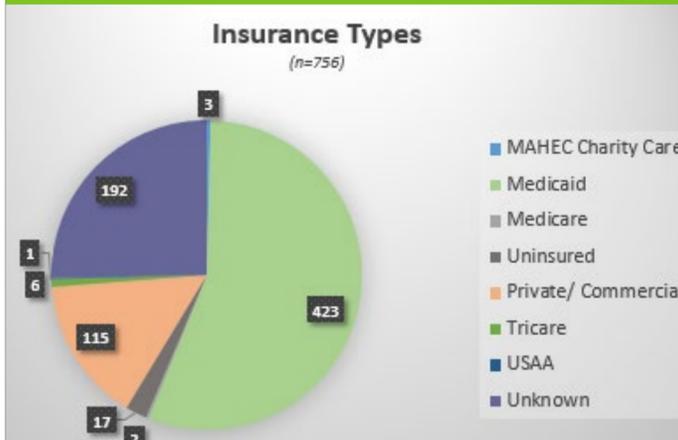
Evaluation Team Authors:
Kim Wood, MA
Courtney Coules, MPH
Manager of School-Based Therapy:
Emily Roberts, LCMHCS

How much did we do?



During the 2021-2022 school year, MAHEC School-Based Therapy received 770 referrals from 14 Buncombe County Schools. The most referrals were received from AC Reynolds High (113), followed by AC Reynolds Middle (90), and Oakley Elementary (83). A majority of referrals were scheduled (330) including those who were later discharged (68). Out of all the students that therapists could schedule, 442 students attended their first appointment. Most appointment types were routine visits (81%) and 324 referred students remain active patients.

How well did we do it?

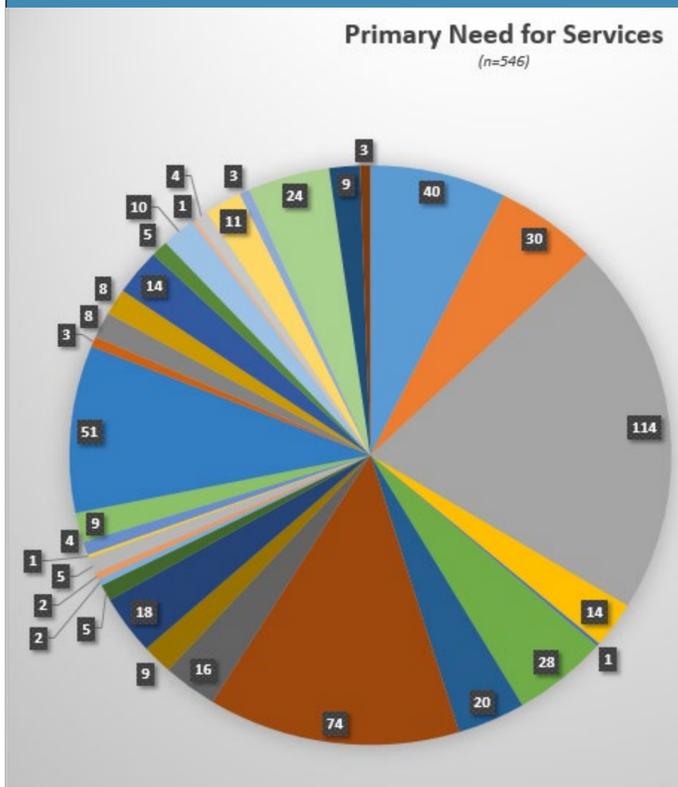
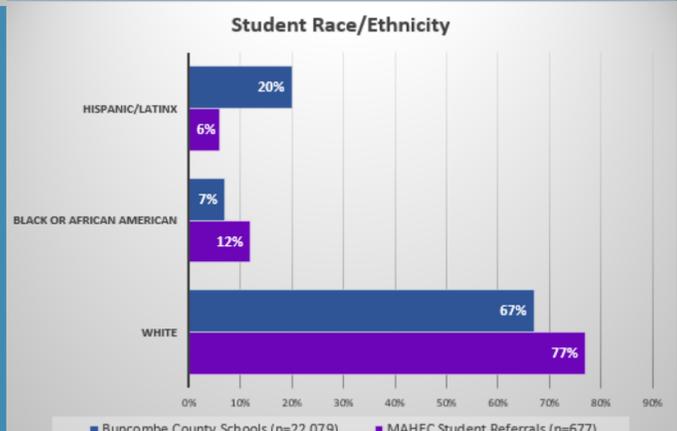


A majority of referred students were Medicaid recipients (423, 56%). There are many students whose insurance status was reported as unknown (192, 25%) which could contribute to the low percentage of uninsured (17, 2%) referred students or other categories. For 2019, Medicaid and CHIP Enrollees comprised 21.7% of Buncombe County's population and uninsured children accounted for 5.2% of the county*.

*NCIOM North Carolina Health Profile: Buncombe County. (2022). NCIOM. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://nciom.org/counties/buncombe-county/>

A majority of referred students identified as White (77%), followed by Black or African American (12%), and Hispanic/Latinx (6%). EdNC.org reports that of 22,079 Buncombe County students, 67% identify as White, 20% identify as Hispanic, and 7% identify as Black*. It is hard to discern whether we are reaching representative portions of the student population based on race/ethnicity given there is no publically available data based on the specific schools that MAHEC School-Based Therapy serves.

*Buncombe County Schools. (2022). EdNC. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://www.ednc.org/district/buncombe/>

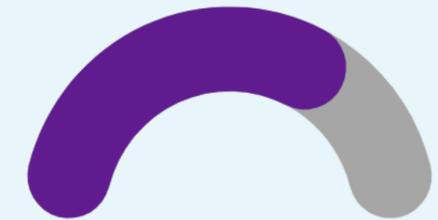


Anxiety comprised 21% (114) of the reported primary needs for services, followed by Depression (14%, 74), and Poor Emotional Regulation (9%, 51). This chart does demonstrate the wide variety of primary needs reported by Buncombe County school-based therapists and it is important to note that there could be multiple reasons for seeking services, but only one primary need was tracked for the purposes of this report. NC DETECT's Mental Health Dashboard reports that in 2020, children aged 10-14 encompassed 8.3% of Buncombe's ED visits for Anxiety, 10.6% for Depression, 2% for Self-Inflicted Injury, 8.8% for Suicidal Ideation, and 3.6% for Trauma/Stressors. For children aged 15-17, Anxiety was 12.7%, Depression was 13.7%, Self-Inflicted Injury was 2.7%, Suicidal Ideation was 8%, and Trauma/Stressors was 5.5%. Compared to statewide trends, all of these parameters were higher for these age groups. Self-Inflicted Injury ED visit rates were higher among children under 17 in Buncombe County compared to people over the age of 18*. These trends show a clear need to address mental health needs within Buncombe County among children.

*NC DETECT. (2020). Mental Health Dashboard. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://ncdetect.org/mental-health-dashboard/>

Is anyone better off?

All Buncombe County School-Based Therapy Patients Live in a HRSA designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)



Out of a possible score of 26, Buncombe County has a 19 Mental HPSA score

*HPSA Find. (2021). HRSA Data. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>

MAHEC School-Based Therapy provided 12 school-based therapists for 14 Buncombe County Schools. All students served by this program live in a mental health professional shortage area* and may not otherwise receive mental health services. The benefit of embedding these services within schools also means that parents/guardians do not need to take off work to transport their child to and from mental health appointments.

Conclusion

MAHEC's School-Based Therapy program has benefited Buncombe County Schools' students by being a vital safety net for mental health services. A majority of referrals become active patients with the added benefit of receiving mental health care while attending school, which may alleviate some burden on their caregivers. There is a clear need for mental health services in Buncombe County specifically for children under 18 as evidenced by the trends reported on NC DETECT*. Furthermore, this program serves students who live in an area that lacks readily available mental health providers. Our program plans to expand services to six new schools in 2022-2023 and add on six new therapists who will continue to provide critical mental health services for children in and around Buncombe County.