

Evaluation of Interventions Utilized in Individual Education Plan (IEP) Counseling in Hillsborough County Public Schools



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Objectives

- Overview of Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services provided
- Brief history of mental health and students identified as ESE
- Methodology of evaluation
- Present codes and themes
- Discuss implications and recommendations for program improvement

Study Purpose

Mental health disorders among the ESE population can often impede the student's ability to receive education within the general education classroom.¹ In order to level the playing field, these students are provided any interventions or accommodations needed to assist them in attaining academic success.

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement. School-based mental health services. *Pediatrics* 2004; 113(6): 1839-1845

Literature Review

Barriers experienced in other school districts:³

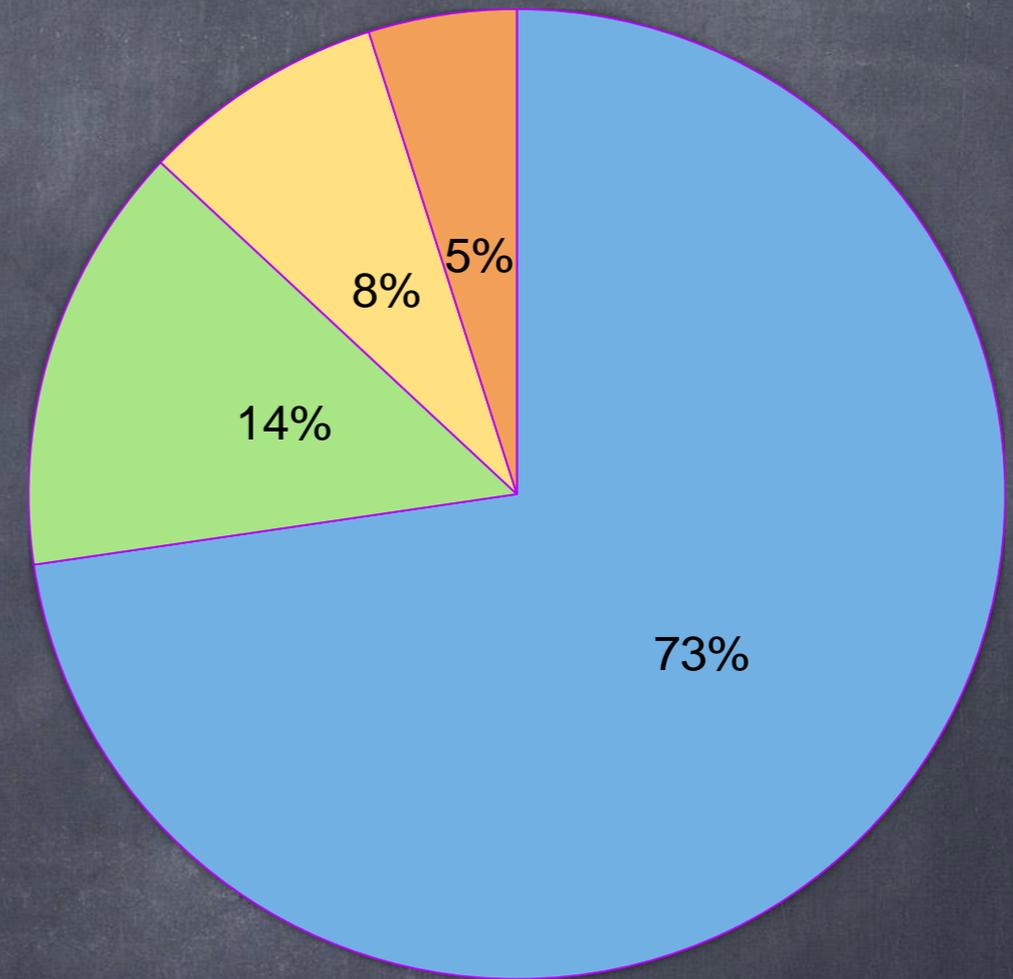
- Caseload requirements
- Assessments are priority to districts
- Assisting in determining special education eligibility

Requests for more training: over 65%

3. Hanchon, T., Fernald, L. The provision of counseling services among school psychologists: An exploration of training, current practices, and perceptions. *Psychology in the Schools* (2013); 50(7): 651-671

The Community Agency: Hillsborough County Public Schools

- 8th largest school district
- 208,177 total students
- 190,606 eligible
- 28,987 (14%) within Exceptional Student Education program



Agency Need

- History of IEP counseling services in district
- Need to streamline process across disciplines
- New district funding focused on behavioral health

Current ESE Services Provided through HCPS

Educational Counseling

- provided on campus during school hours
- evaluation methods not present
- designated IEP counselors:
 - School Social Workers
 - School Psychologists

Specific Aims

- What does counseling as a supportive service mean in Hillsborough County Public Schools?
- How are the services delivered?
- Is there uniformity of practice among designated counseling providers?
- How are services being evaluated?
- Do the counselors have identified needs that could create more proficiency?

Methodology

- Focus Group Methodology
 - 5 groups
 - planned contrasting
 - 5 primary questions, 2 probing questions
 - audio recording/transcribed
 - MAXQDA

Areas of Study

- Identification
- Goal Setting
- Techniques Utilized
- Measuring Progress
- Perception of Professional Preparedness

Focus Group Questions

Identification

- How are students within the exceptional student education program identified as needing counseling as a supportive service or intervention?

Focus Group Questions

Goal Setting:

- Do the goals outlined on the student's individualized education plan (IEP) adequately address the counseling needs of the student?

Focus Group Questions

Techniques, Interventions and Methods:

- What counseling techniques, interventions or methods do you utilize?

Focus Group Questions

Evaluation:

- Are you measuring client progress toward the counseling goal?
 - What tools do you use to measure progress?
 - How often do you measure progress?

Focus Group Questions

Perception of professional preparedness:

- Do you feel the skills that you bring through your professional training adequately prepare you to provide the service?

Prospective Outcomes For Scholars

- Development of training manual
- Database of evidence based
- Uniform evaluative measures

Dissemination

- Institute for Translational Research in Adolescent Behavioral Health
- School Social Work Services
- School Psychology Department
- Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department

Identification Themes

- IEP counselors not present during meetings to determine need or eligibility for counseling as a supportive service
- Definition of “counseling” in educational settings provided to all stakeholders
- Structured criteria for identifying students needing counseling on their IEP

Goal Appropriateness Themes

- Goals not always identified or present
- Vague terms
 - anger management
 - social skills
 - self-esteem
- Not quantifiable
- No structure
- Goal setting timeline

Methods, Techniques, and Intervention Themes

- Web based resources (teachers pay teachers.com)
- Department provided games and resources
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Solution-focused therapy
- Personal purchased books and games

Evaluation Themes

Evaluative tool:

- Classroom teacher observations and feedback
- District database (EdConnect)
- Grades
- Referrals
- Student self-reporting

Frequency:

- weekly
- monthly
- every 9 weeks

Preparedness Themes

- Adapting clinical skills to school setting
- District professional development (specific schools identified)
- Client and counselor compatibility
- Self-evaluated effectiveness
- Trainings only address paperwork

“IEP counseling what I am finding is not counseling.”

Perceived Strengths

- Success stories

“They still come to my door so that’s a benefit.”

“People ask me what do I do? I tell them I am my kid’s cheerleader.”

- Individual school processes

- collaboration by administrations, school leaders

- Individually created documents

- Collaboration with outside therapeutic resources

Perceived Barriers

- Time and caseload constraints
- Student attendance
- Student buy-in
- Duration of services
- Duplication of services
- Collaborating with stakeholders

Recommendations

- Enhance training manual for designated IEP counselors
- Database of evidence based interventions for youth within ESE programs
- Professional development trainings offered year round with current research
- Regular meetings for designated counselors to share best practice
- Uniform self-evaluative measures for IEP counseling within HCPS
- Automated tracking system to identify students receiving IEP counseling and their progress

References

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement. School-based mental health services. *Pediatric* (2004); 113(6): 1839-1845.
2. National Academic Advising Association: <http://www.nacaa.ksu.edu>
3. Hanchon, T., and Fernald, L. The provision of counseling services among school psychologists: An exploration of training, current practices, and perceptions. *Psychology in the Schools* (2013); 50(7): 651-671.
4. Kutash, K., and Duchnowski, A. The mental health needs of youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities placed in special education programs in urban schools. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2004); 13(2): 235-248.
5. Nichter, M. and Edmonson, S. Counseling services for special education students. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory & Research*. (2005); 33(2): 50-62.

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Questions?