

School Social Services and Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Annual Report - June 2008



Respectively submitted by:
Dianne C. Martin-Morgan, Coordinator
ESE and Student Services

School Social Services Activities

1. Accountability
 - Record Keeping
 - Data Collection
 - Medicaid Reimbursement
 - Travel

2. Assessment (**Federally Mandated – Funded via IDEA/Medicaid**)
 - Social & Developmental History (Regular, Child Find/Pre-K)
 - Bilingual Social History
 - Screening (i.e., DIBELS, Vineland Adaptive)
 - PLUS Assessment
 - Private School Referrals/Services
 - Review of Records
 - Observation of Student
 - Reevaluation Meeting
 - Reevaluation/Social History Update
 - Report Writing

3. Compulsory Attendance (**State Mandated – Unfunded**)
 - Telephone Contacts
 - CINS/FINS Staff Consultations
 - CINS/FINS Case Staffings
 - Attendance Improvement Plans
 - ASAP Referrals
 - Court Referrals
 - Problem Solving Teams (PST) (Formerly SST)
 - Court Hearings
 - Teen Court Referrals
 - Attendance Case Management
 - DNE Referrals
 - Rilya Wilson Compliance
 - Immunization
 - Home Visits

4. Attendance Campaign Awareness
 - Attendance Awareness Week (Fourth Week in September)
 - Everybody Everyday: Poem, Poster, and Video Rap Contest
 - Achieving School Attendance Program (Partnership with State Attorney's Office)
 - Excellence in Attendance Award
 - Attendance Awards Ceremony
 - Superintendent's Attendance Challenge Award
 - Attendance Brochures

5. Counseling as a Related Service (**Federally Mandated – Related Services IDEA/Medicaid Funding**)
 - Individual
 - Group

6. Homeless Services (**Federally Mandated – Portions of our Services are Funded through Title X/McKinney-Vento Act**)
 - Contact Regarding Procedures/Policies/Law
 - Contact Regarding Community Agencies/Assistance
 - Contact Regarding Data/School Services
 - Contact Regarding Grant/DOE/District

7. Home Education (**State Mandated – Unfunded**)
 - Evaluation Follow-up
 - Enrollment Follow-up
 - Portfolio Review Meetings
 - Drivers License
 - Partial Enrollment
 - Bright Futures
 - Florida Virtual School
 - ESE Evaluation
 - Basic Information

8. Drivers License (**State Mandated – Unfunded**)
 - Consultation
 - Parents
 - Schools
 - DHSMV

9. Learnfare (**State Mandated – Unfunded**)
 - School Social Work Referral
 - Monthly Report

10. Child Law/Partial Waiver (**State Mandated – Unfunded**)
 - Regular Referral
 - ESE Referral

11. District Student Placement Committee
 - Consultation/Meeting
 - Case Management Referral
 - Follow-up
 - Case Management Report
 - Social History Evaluation
 - Teacher Consultation
 - Staffing

- Cum Review
 - Parent Contact
12. Legal Cases
 - Parent Contact
 - Social History Evaluation
 - Cum Review
 - Teacher Consultation
 - Staffing
 13. Safe and Drug-Free Schools programming (**Federally Funded through Title V, NCLB**)
 - PLUS Program
 - Bridges Programs
 - Too Good for Drugs Program
 - Bullying Your Schools Program
 - iSafe (Internet Safety Program)
 14. PLUS Education
 - Individual
 - Group
 - Parent (Drug Proofing Your Schools)
 - Classroom Series
 15. Foster Care (Dependency) Follow-up
 16. Crisis Response (i.e., Intent to Harm, school/student response, child abuse and neglect)
 17. Intervention (i.e., FBA, AIP)
 - Development
 - Implementation
 - Behavior Support Team
 18. Professional Development
 - Personal Growth (i.e., attend workshop/conference, focus group meeting, professional reading, attendance committee)
 - Providing In-service to Others (i.e., in-service presentation to other role group, school staff, parents)
 - Peer Teachers and Supervisors of Masters Level Interns
 19. Security Audits
 20. ESE Case Reviews/Staffing/IEP Meetings/Manifestation Hearings

21. Consultation

- Consultation with Administrators
- Consultation with Instructional Staff
- Consultation with Other Professional Staff
- Consultation with Support Staff
- Consultation with Community Agencies
- Consultation with Parents
- Consultation with Students
- Court Hearings
- FSPT Meetings
- Staff or Departmental Meetings
- Home Visits
- Telephone Calls (i.e., phoned/left message with parent/guardian, community agency, school district personnel)
- Provide Financial/Material Needs
- Transition Services
- ESOL Services (i.e., translation, etc.)
- Student Success Team (SST)
- Response to Intervention (RtI) (i.e., five elementary pilot schools where social workers are participating)

22. Other School Support (i.e., FCAT proctoring, reading with classes, open house, Red Ribbon Week, MADD and SAFE presentations, Career Day, first day of school, presentation at faculty or SAC meetings at schools, presentation to student teacher interns yearly)

23. Community Education/Presentation

- Number of Participants
- Job Fairs (i.e., University)
- Private Schools
- Serve on Community Task Force (i.e., underage drinking)
- People For Drug-Free Youth Board Members

School Social Services Department

New pressures on communities, families, and schools have resulted in more at-risk students. The School Social Services staff works in collaboration with other professionals and community agencies in order to meet numerous student and family needs. Staff members address a myriad of issues including absenteeism, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, peer mediation, career education/planning, school safety, substance abuse prevention, academic/behavioral issues, and mental health. Working together with school personnel, families, and the community, School Social Services professionals offer support such as consultation, referral, assessment, progress monitoring, counseling, case management, home-school-community liaison, and membership and leadership of school-based teams. In addition, the staff also provides services to schools in times of crisis with grief and loss issues.

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) describes school social work as “a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. School Social Workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the Student Services team. They are instrumental in furthering the purpose of the schools: To provide a setting for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence. School Social Workers are hired by the school district to enhance the district’s ability to meet its academic mission, especially where home, school, and community collaboration is the key to achieving that mission.”

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has established Standards for School Social Work Services which define school social work as “social work services provided in the setting of an educational agency by credential School Social Workers. This specialty in social work is oriented toward helping students make satisfactory adjustments and coordinating and influencing the efforts of the school, the family, and the community to achieve this goal.”

The role of the School Social Worker is becoming more critical as schools move forward in meeting the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) under No Child Left Behind and ensuring that achievement gaps and issues around disproportionality are addressed.

In the Volusia County School District, the School Social Services Department includes home education (home schooling), compulsory school attendance, the PLUS program (alcohol and drug prevention education), homeless education services, and other programs funded by the Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) grant. **NOTE:** The Home Education program was moved to the Hospital/HomeBound Office at the end of the school year.

There were twenty-three school social work positions assigned to schools during the 2007-08 school year. The School Social Workers are assigned to elementary, middle, and high schools as well as alternative education sites (schools of choice and schools of placement), and charter schools.

| Assignments | School Social Workers |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| # staff with 3 schools | 10 |
| # staff with 4 schools | 12 |
| # staff with 5 schools | 1 |

In addition to the twenty-three social work positions, the following four staff members are responsible for the programs as noted: Benita Brown (District Student Placement Committee, Drivers License, Learnfare, and Litigation Avoidance cases), Martha Aldrich (PLUS, Home Education, Child Labor, and SDFS grant assistance), Francene Barnes (Court Liaison for Attendance and Attendance Awareness Campaign), and Pam Woods (District Homeless Liaison). Three of these four staff members also serve on-call to Reading Edge, Storefront East, and Storefront West. Pam Woods' position is grant-funded and is not included in the social work staff allocation. Two special assigned social workers (Benita and Martha) also assist the district with Security Audits throughout the year.

There were also seven PLUS Caseworkers who provided alcohol/drug education, resources, and support to empower students to make safe choices. The PLUS program (Preventing, Learning, and Understanding Substances) is a prevention, early intervention, and case management program. PLUS program goals include increasing students' knowledge about the dangers of drugs/alcohol, improving their decision-making abilities and attitudes, and preventing/eliminating drug or alcohol use. The PLUS Caseworkers serve students at the middle and high school level who are at risk for, suspected of, or who have admitted to the use of alcohol/drugs. Services are also offered to students who may have a family member involved in alcohol/drugs. Consultation services are available regarding students at the elementary level who may be suspected of being involved in alcohol/drugs.

PLUS Caseworkers hold Certified Addiction Prevention Professional (CAPP) certification and use proven and effective, research-based curriculum. Referrals for PLUS services may be initiated by teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, parents, or students. Services may include assessment, educational group work, case management, consultation, classroom presentations (efforts are made to align classroom sessions with Sunshine State Standards), and community referrals. Referrals are made to community agencies when it is determined that further assessment, counseling, or treatment services may be needed.

The School Social Services Department is also accountable for several mandated responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, compulsory attendance, Social and Developmental History reports, counseling as a related service, home education, homelessness, drivers license, learnfare, child labor law, child abuse and neglect, foster care, Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant, etc. The entire staff serves either on the district, regional, and/or school-based crisis teams.

This year, identified social workers became more involved with the five pilot "Response to Intervention" schools (Friendship, McInnis, Horizon, Turie T. Small, and Starke) and the behavioral initiatives throughout the district. The department continued providing transitional services to students leaving hospital/homebound, expulsion, and psychiatric facilities. The partnership with Community Based Care was continued by monitoring dependency students who were defined under the Rilya Wilson Act.

Our ESOL referrals are handled by four bilingual School Social Workers in addition to their regular school assignments. The department's Child Find referrals were completed by four School Social Workers in addition to their regular duties.

The chart below shows a small sampling of the referrals and/or services rendered to students, parents, and schools for the 2007-08 school year.

| | |
|-------|---|
| 653 | social history referrals completed and sent (680 in 06/07) |
| 11923 | attendance referral contacts – duplicated (8851 in 06/07) |
| 2494 | academic assistance provided (2122 in 06/07) |
| 4896 | behavioral assistance provided (3287 in 06/07) |
| 1979 | students identified as homeless (1884 in 06/07) |
| 787 | students received PLUS assessments (901 in 06/07) |
| 1467 | students received PLUS interventions through classroom series (1772 in 06/07) |
| 174 | students receiving case management services (185 in 06/07) |
| 32 | drivers license cases (45 in 06/07) |
| 123 | students assisted due to learnfare requirements (227 in 06/07) |
| 1122 | cases referred to the expulsion team (social worker is assigned) (1155 in 06/07) |
| 2617 | home visits made (2588 in 06/07) |
| 1334 | referrals made to outside agencies (1062 in 06/07) |
| 569 | students/families assisted with financial needs (354 in 06/07) |
| 472 | students assisted with health needs (immunization, shot records, medication) (577 in 06/07) |

The complete **School Social Services District Analysis** of all the contacts and services rendered for 2007-08 is attached at the end of this report.

The State of Florida's budget reductions tremendously impacted Volusia County Schools. All district departments and school budgets were significantly reduced. Our department lost two school social work and three PLUS casework positions at the end of the school year. Although all five workers are no longer in our department, they all remain employed with Volusia County Schools and continue to be a part of our Student Services team. Martha Aldrich, a dedicated 22-year staff member, retired after serving as the Program Contact for PLUS, Child Labor, and the Home Education programs. Martha also provided technical assistance and leadership for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. Martha's dedication to the students and families was exemplified in her work each and every day. She was indeed a part of the lifeblood of this department. These workers will all be greatly missed.

Descriptive Listing of Some of the School Social Work Services

Attendance:

The vision statement of the Volusia County School District sets the tone for this district's commitment to providing a quality education to all of its students. In order to produce students who will become successful contributors to our democratic society, we must first begin with an educational system that allows each child to reach their maximum potential. Academic achievement is at the top of the list of variables that contribute to a child's ability to succeed in life. Academic achievement is directly correlated to the *time spent* engaged in educational activities. "A National Center for School Engagement literature review (Heilbrunn, 2007) found that truants have lower grades, need to repeat grades, drop out of school, are expelled from school, or just do not graduate from high school, at higher rates than students with fewer unexcused absences" (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Prevention Brief).

During the first national symposium on truancy prevention held in Washington, DC in December 2004, J. Robert Flores, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention stated in his message to participants, "the three A's – Attendance, Attachment, and Achievement... reflect an important component of a child's school success and ultimately his or her future as a productive, healthy, and happy adult." While the ultimate goal of any educational institution is to maximize the academic achievement of all of its students, current conventional wisdom dictates that you cannot achieve this goal without also addressing regular school attendance and a child's emotional connection with the school. If a child does not feel a connection or a bond with their school they will not attend and if they do not attend, they cannot achieve. If our district wants to distinguish itself as a leader in educational excellence, then we cannot ignore nor neglect the important role that regular attendance plays in achieving this goal.

How Do We Increase The Attendance Rate?

School Social Workers collaborate with school personnel to improve attendance rates and intervene when students are truant from school. We help implement strategies to reduce truancy and monitor attendance for students referred for services. In addition, we help promote programs that improve attendance rates schoolwide.

To achieve the goal of increased student attendance and ultimately academic achievement, our district has continued to engage in a number of activities designed to raise the awareness of the importance of regular school attendance and its relationship to academic achievement. Two activities, the "Everybody, Everyday" poster, poem, and video rap contest and the Superintendent's Attendance Challenge have grown in popularity. These programs recognize schools for their excellence in attendance and reinforce regular attendance as a priority for the district. Award-winning schools foster a sense of pride in their improved attendance rates.

During the 2007-08 school year, the School Social Work Department continued its efforts to emphasize the regular school attendance by recruiting four schools to serve as pilots to implement strategies designed to improve attendance. Three schools, Heritage

Middle, Seabreeze High, and the Community Learning Center West volunteered and concentrated on increasing their overall attendance rate. Burns Oak-Hill Elementary School volunteered and decided to reduce the number of students tardy to class. All of the schools were successful in achieving their objective. Heritage Middle and Seabreeze High increased their attendance rates by .4%. Community Learning Center West increased its daily attendance rate by 1.5% compared to their 2006-07 rates. Burns Oak-Hill Elementary decreased the number of students with 10 or more tardies by 47%. In addition, Burns Oak-Hill and Heritage Middle decreased the number of students with 15 or more unexcused absences at their schools by 3.8% and 2.0% respectively. The number of students who met the legal definition of truancy also decreased at three of the pilot schools. Heritage Middle had a .7% decrease in its truancy rate, Seabreeze High had a .5% decrease in its truancy rate, and Community Learning Center West had a 4.2% decrease in the number of students meeting the legal definition of habitual truancy. The success of these pilot schools demonstrates that schools can make a difference when they focus on improving attendance.

During the past four years, the increased emphasis on improving attendance has resulted in positive gains district wide. The incidence of students accumulating 15 or more unexcused absences from school has decreased at elementary, middle, and alternative school sites. Since 2004, elementary schools decreased the percentage of students accumulating 15 or more unexcused absences from 5.4% to 4.6%. Middle schools decreased their numbers from 8.9% to 5.8%. Alternative education sites decreased their truancy rate from 50.5% in 2004 to 40.3% in 2008. The habitual truancy rate has fluctuated during the past four years at alternative education sites. There has been a consistent decline in the percentage of truant students at the middle school level. Habitual truancy in elementary schools has consistently remained at less than 1% of their population. High schools have had a small increase in the percentage of truant students over the past four years.

The overall picture for attendance is positive and it is clear that we are moving in the right direction. When the data is disaggregated, it is revealed that exceptional education students make up 30.4% of all habitual truants and 29% of all students who accumulated 15 or more unexcused absences in a year. These high percentages of exceptional education students represent a disproportionate number of students. Our data also shows that high school students and alternative education students accumulate 15 or more unexcused absences or are habitually truant at a higher rate than our elementary and middle school students. These trends are alarming and such data is crucial for helping plan where we should concentrate our efforts.

The success of our pilot schools, the positive trend towards improved attendance in our district, and research that correlates academic achievement and regular attendance are evidence that we should continue our emphasis on improving attendance if we expect our students to reach their maximum potential. Our schools should continue to implement programs and strategies that promote regular school attendance. They should also find ways to support student attachment to school by encouraging at-risk students to become more involved at school. Schools need to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for such students. Students need a sense of connection and belonging to their school. If students develop an attachment to their schools, improved attendance will follow. With improved attendance, academic achievement will surely increase. Promoting such a bond should include reaching out to parents. Current

research indicates that parental involvement is also critical to a child's academic success.

Statistics for individual schools as well as statistics for the combined categories of elementary, middle, high, and alternative education schools have been calculated to identify the number of truant students and the number of students who accumulate 15 or more unexcused absences at each school. Each school's habitual truancy rate for the 2007-08 school year is listed in the charts attached at the end of this report, as well as the school's percentage of students with 15 or more unexcused absences. The data provides us with a snapshot of where each individual school stands with regards to the district's goal for attendance and an overall picture of how each category compares with the district's expectations. The data also helps us identify where we are doing well and highlights areas of weakness. If we know our weaknesses, we can begin to address them and make progress towards achieving our goal. The charts also include a 3-year comparison of the 15 or more unexcused absences rate for the elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools as well as a 5-year comparison of the habitual truancy rate for each category

To summarize the attendance initiatives, the Volusia County School District has made a commitment to provide all of its students with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to become productive and happy contributors to our society. As an educational institution, we know that in order to live up to that commitment, academic achievement is critical. In order for our children to reach their optimum academic potential, we know that regular school attendance is the key. The district has therefore set a goal of attaining a 97% attendance rate as a means of ensuring a quality education for all of our children. Our current emphasis on improving attendance has been instrumental in inspiring schools to rethink their priorities and to include attendance as one of their major concerns. Individual school staff members have begun to include improving attendance as one of their goals. During the past school year, many guidance counselors included improved attendance as one of their goals for the year. In this respect we believe that these programs have been highly successful in accomplishing what we set out to do.

Counseling and Social Skills Training:

Counseling is provided to address the social, emotional, behavioral, cultural, and mental health needs of students within the interconnecting environments of their home, school, and community. The staff uses an ecological approach to ensure that factors that interfere with a student's learning are examined and addressed in a systematic manner. A strengths perspective emphasizing a student's assets is used to help develop plans needed to better assist the student. Counseling may be provided individually or in small groups, depending on the needs of the student. A variety of concerns may be addressed which may include, but are not limited to, anger management, attendance issues, teen parenting, drug and alcohol awareness, student success skills, grief and loss issues, etc. School personnel are consulted regularly to help coordinate support services.

Counseling as a Related Service – CARS Task Force:

Educators and service providers throughout Florida are working collaboratively to ensure that school districts make counseling services available to special education students. During the 2006-07 school year, Volusia County Schools responded to the Office of Special Education and Programs (OSEP) state board rules, and began providing services to students identified as Emotional/Behavioral Disabled (EBD – formerly Severely Emotionally Disturbed). The School Social Workers and School Psychologists provide EBD services to more than 250 students at 15 designated sites, working collaboratively with Exceptional Student Education (ESE) administrators, teachers, and behavior specialists to ensure an effective and efficient service delivery model.

A CARS Task Force was formed at the start of service delivery. The task force has been an interdepartmental collaboration between School Social Workers and School Psychologists to review, evaluate, and make recommendations on best practice for the implementation of CARS. Additionally, the SED/Network manager played an active role in assisting the task force members during this process. The CARS Task Force members have dedicated their time, experience, and knowledge to this effort to insure that our students receive the highest quality of services.

The task force reviewed identified barriers that were encountered in the previous school year while providing services. The most common barriers identified were scheduling of appropriate space, having sufficient time to provide the service, and student attendance. School Psychologists and School Social Workers shared some frustrations with obtaining counseling resources to implement CARS. The task force agreed it would be beneficial to have a listing of already available evidenced-based delivery service models. In addition, they wanted to purchase new counseling resource materials. They collaborated with the SED/Network manager and several evidence-based materials were purchased.

A standardized documentation of services was developed for all service providers to use for quality and compliance issues. The School Social Services Coordinator pursued reimbursement dollars through the Medicaid office and helped develop electronic documentation forms to be launched during the 2008-09 school year.

The CARS Task Force submitted the following recommendations at the end of the school year which will be reviewed by the respective coordinators:

- Provide interventions to students at the onset of maladaptive behaviors being demonstrated which are negatively impacting academically engaged time, as well as their ability to learn the necessary academic skills and perform to their cognitive ability.
- Develop a continuum of behavioral interventions that have varying levels of intensity that include variations on frequency and duration, method of delivery (i.e., classroom, group, individual), and specialization (i.e., content areas, cognitive ability, and age appropriateness).
- Develop behavioral interventions that are aligned with the RtI/PST process and the three level tier concept of intervention.
- Expand the CARS/educationally related counseling services to provide assistance for behavioral concerns before a self-contained classroom intervention is needed.

- Expand services by taking a comprehensive look at the available human resources across all departments (i.e., Behavioral Specialists, Guidance Counselors, School Psychologists, and School Social Workers), with the skills and ability to be an active participant in the district's behavioral initiative, any expansion of CARS/educationally related counseling, and the district's adaptation of the Rtl/PST process in regards to addressing behavioral concerns.
- Develop a ratio between students being served and school staff available to provide behavioral interventions, with careful attention being given to intensity, method of delivery, and specialization.
- Utilize the outcome measures to monitor progress and demonstrate effectiveness of behavioral interventions. This information should be aligned with educationally relevant data and academic progress.
- Increase the incorporation of parents and guardians in our behavioral interventions. Family involvement and support for behavioral interventions will increase effectiveness and the students' response to intervention.
- Pursue financial resources outside of the school district to assist in conceptualizing, developing, and implementing a systematic, data driven, evidence-based, continuum of services aligned with the Rtl/PST process.

Crisis Response:

School Social Workers/PLUS Caseworkers provide immediate response to crisis situations. They help at the district, regional, and school-based levels following severe situations such as deaths, suicides, acts of violence, and natural disasters (hurricanes and tornadoes), etc. Crisis work may be extended over several days.

This year, the district crisis team worked collaboratively with many departments in creating an emotional safety plan for all students. A comprehensive youth suicide prevention initiative was developed involving all schools, appropriate staff, students, and the community. All appropriate staff (school-based instructional/non-instructional and transportation staff) participated in the training on preventing youth suicide, which included watching the "Creating Emotional Safety for our Students" video as a follow-up/refresher training (completed in April). The Teacher Induction Program included a suicide prevention component for new teachers.

There was parent and community involvement in this suicide prevention initiative. Information was provided on suicide prevention through school newsletters, District Advisory Council, and guest speakers from Mental Health agencies. The SED/Network manager arranged for increased access to mental health agencies on school sites in the Deltona area. Also, the school board proclaimed September 10-16 as National Suicide Prevention Week. During May, an emphasis was placed on the National Mental Health Month.

Students were also involved in this initiative. "Teens helping Teens" forums were incorporated in the Student Government Association (SGA) agenda and other youth organizations to promote overall emotional safety. The forum discussed topics such as preventing child abuse, bullying, and suicide. District Administration members met with SGA's sponsors and presidents to develop ways to incorporate emotional safety into their agenda. The SGA presidents adapted this issue for their individual high school,

following a model developed by Atlantic High. SGA representatives spoke to students at the middle school level, with the target audience of parents and staff. Posters designed by students to promote mental health awareness were placed in schools.

Child Abuse Reporting and Training:

While all educators are mandated reporters and are required to report suspected abuse or neglect, teachers and administrators often rely on the School Social Worker to determine if the presenting information warrants a report to the abuse registry. School Social Workers provide annual training to school staff on reporting procedures and consult with school staff about sensitive cases as their expertise in this area is most valuable.

Academic Achievement:

School Social Workers bring their unique skills and systems perspective to the assessment and diagnosis of children's needs. They help facilitate problem identification and solutions. Social workers assist in implementing academic improvement programs such as study and test-taking skills, Why Try programming, mentoring, etc. They also foster an open communication with parents to enhance their involvement. School Social Workers use a systems perspective to identify academic strengths in the student and environment.

Pre-Referral for ESE:

A major responsibility of the School Social Worker is as a member of the school-based intervention team. This team is responsible for the pre-referral procedures to determine eligibility for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services. If a student is experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties, the social worker observes the student and gathers information from their cumulative record, the parent, the teacher, and the student. A confidential Social and Developmental History report may be requested and prepared. Interventions are developed as part of the individual success plan for the student. In addition to the involvement with the pre-referral process, social workers also assist with the development of behavioral plans for ESE and general education students, IEPs, and 504 plans. They also provide ongoing consultation with teachers and parents, as well as direct services to students.

Social and Developmental History Assessments:

The purpose of the social history is to obtain information about the student that extends beyond the school environment. Social history reports contain interpersonal, familial, and environmental factors that influence the student's adaptation to school. Parents' knowledge of their child's functioning is documented. Community-based interventions, evaluations, and any information that will help the school-based team make an educational diagnosis and recommendations are included. During the 2007-08 school year, the School Social Workers completed 653 social histories in the average of 22.57 days.

The “Best Practice in Report Writing” Committee was developed to ensure that our department stays up to date with best practice protocols and assessment methods. The committee meets monthly to review social history reports and offer constructive feedback. They monitor new legislation regarding ESE programs for students with disabilities. The committee was also formed to strengthen the quality of services available to students with special needs.

Consultation:

Social workers consult with teachers, administrators, members of the school board, and representatives of the community. Consultation with teachers involves dealing with attendance issues, behavioral problems, social problems, or mental health issues with the ultimate goal of improving classroom performance. The School Social Services staff works diligently to establish strong relationships with administrators. Although direct work with students is a huge piece of our work, it sometimes limits the number of students that can benefit from our services. So through our consultation work, we are able to impact more students and build capacity of other educators to effectively address the barriers to learning faced by many students.

Home-School-Community Liaison:

The School Social Work Association of America defines School Social Workers as trained mental health professionals who serve as the link between the home, school, and community providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families, and school personnel to promote and support students’ academic and social successes. Many students experience barriers to learning that involve circumstances outside of the school environment. School Social Workers are knowledgeable about family and community agency systems (i.e., social services, juvenile justice, mental health, etc.) and engage with these systems on a regular basis to elicit support for students, their families, and schools.

School Social Workers and PLUS Caseworkers provide referral information to students and families and advocate for anyone who may be disenfranchised or otherwise challenged to take advantage of community-based services. They also identify and develop resources within the school system.

Homelessness:

All school districts are mandated to comply with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. One aspect of the federal law states that all local educational agencies will designate an appropriate staff person to serve as a liaison. The local liaison has specific duties as defined in the law.

Volusia County has received a Title X sub-grant for the past five years. Grant funds are used for the salary and benefits of a district liaison to oversee implementation of the Act. Funds are also used for tutoring at shelters, for transportation needs such as bus tokens for parents and students in specific hardship cases, in- and out-of-district travel, for

educational posters and brochures (English and Spanish), and for training materials for school and community personnel.

Volusia County's District Homeless Education Steering Committee meets quarterly to review policies and procedures that might impede identification, enrollment, and retention of homeless children. The committee includes representatives from the different departments that directly affect these students and community agencies that serve the homeless. This group revises procedures related to enrollment and variances, and coordinates the training of appropriate staff when needed. The liaison coordinates this on-going effort.

For the past four years, through the liaison, the steering committee has held their meetings at agencies that serve the homeless. By going out into the community, committee members have greatly increased their understanding of the many barriers these students face in school. In addition, this linkage with the community has increased communication with those agencies that directly serve our families and has facilitated quicker enrollment in school.

The procedures manual for enrolling was updated. It is used by school personnel when enrolling and serving homeless students. A brochure for parents explaining the law and student rights, titled "What Families Need to Know about Homelessness and Public Education," was printed (English and Spanish) and placed in the schools, at shelters, and community agencies. The "Finding Your Way – A Guide to Resources in Volusia County" brochure is in its fourth printing, and the Spanish version was updated. It is used both in and out of the school district.

A survey of services was sent to all registrars and the steering committee members (which include agency personnel who serve the homeless). Sixty-two surveys were returned, with the only criticism of the program being the delivery of school supplies (which is done through Title I). There were several inquiries regarding "Best Interest Determination" meetings, but only one was actually held.

Education and information on homelessness continues to be disseminated in the district and the community. On March 23, 2008, the Daytona Beach News-Journal published a feature article about homelessness and the role of the school district. There has been increased awareness in the entire county of the needs of the homeless. The school district's data plays a critical role in documenting this need. A PowerPoint presentation is available for use, and several in-services and trainings were done (see Homeless Community Log).

The Homeless Liaison has continued working with the United Way's Women's Initiative to develop and fund a Case Manager position that will serve the west side of the county. The Initiative raised the dollars necessary to acquire this person, and interviews will be conducted this summer. The liaison also worked with United Way to secure a grant for RSVP volunteers who will mentor our homeless students.

On a daily basis, the liaison is the contact for questions and assistance regarding homelessness from school personnel and community agencies. Parents also call directly for referrals and assistance. The liaison works closely and on an on-going basis within the departments of Student Services, ESE, Management Information System (MIS), School Way Café, Records, and Transportation.

There is a close working relationship with the STAR shelter (Shelter + Teamwork Achieves Results), both for families moving in and out, and for tutoring. The grant pays for after school tutors and educational materials. As these families move in and out of the shelter frequently, we are still determining the best way to serve this highly mobile population academically. There were 32 school-age children that participated in the tutoring.

The numbers identified as meeting the federal homeless definition continues to increase. In the 2002-03 school year, only 350 children and youth were identified as homeless. That increased to 577 in 2003-04. For 2004-05, Volusia County had 1125 total homeless students. For 2005-06, there were 1677 unduplicated students, and in 2006-07, the population increased to 1884. This school year, 1979 homeless students were identified. Identification of this population is the critical first step if we are to address and serve the needs of this high-risk population. (See attached data report on homeless students.)

Children and youth identified as homeless tend to be at risk due to several factors. They lack stability in their lives and often suffer from extreme poverty. Of the 1979 students identified this school year, 533 have withdrawn from Volusia County Schools indicating an extremely high mobility rate. Research shows they are behind in academic performance, sometimes up to two years. We also know from talking with our families who remain in-county, that they may move multiple times, with the only source of stability for their child being the same school (when possible).

Improving homeless children's academic performance is our goal and that is a complex task. Our homeless students did improve this year on the FCAT. They saw 2% gains in almost every grade as required by the grant. We did test fewer homeless students than last year. (See attached 2007 FCAT scores.)

Twenty-five homeless students were selected for monitoring. Three were identified as unaccompanied youth who graduated from high school. Seventeen students resided in the STAR shelter at one time and most of those received tutoring services. Seven of the total moved out of the county before the school year ended.

Keeping awareness up and serving homeless students is an on-going process. We learn as we go. Much has been accomplished in five years.

District Student Placement Committee (DSPC):

Students referred for expulsion for the 2007-08 school year (through 6/11/08) totaled 1122 (duplicated). As an alternative to expulsion, students were returned to school with case management or placed in alternative education. Some students withdrew to attend school in another district/state, the Hospital/Homebound program, Home Education, or alternative programs (i.e., Daytona State College, charter schools, DJJ). In addition, three students were recommended to be expelled from school. There were 509 ESE students and 53 students with 504 plans referred for expulsion this school year.

The DSPC meets every Wednesday beginning at 8:30 a.m. throughout the school year. The meetings often end in the late afternoon between 3-3:30 p.m. Benita Brown serves as a member of the committee and contributes to a holistic assessment of students

referred for expulsion. She assists in the staffings and review of cases referred for expulsion as well as and completing Social and Developmental History reports and providing follow-up services as requested. She also meets with parents as needed to explain due process and educational options when their child is referred for expulsion. Parents/students may appeal the recommendation to expel or transfer to alternative education. Consideration is then given to place the student in Off-Campus Instruction (hospital/homebound) or alternative education in lieu of expulsion, or they may return to school with case management or Off-Campus Instruction in lieu of alternative education.

Case Management Services:

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has established Standards for School Social Workers. Case management is defined as organizing, coordinating, and sustaining activities and services designed to optimize the functioning of students and/or families.

During the 2007-08 school year there were 174 students referred for case management. A data base is maintained and updated weekly of students referred for case management indicating referral school, grade, race/gender, and ESE status. The cases were referred to the appropriate School Social Worker for follow-up and monitoring of the students' academics, attendance, and discipline. The social worker serves as an advocate for students. At the end of the school year, 137 cases were closed and 37 case management cases were recommended for carryover during the 2008-09 school year.

Drivers License:

Section 322.091, F.S. was enacted to reduce truancy and ensure that schools respond in a timely manner to student non-attendance. This statute requires students to attend school in order to maintain their driving privileges. Students who have lost their driving privileges due to failure to comply with attendance requirements may seek a personal or family hardship waiver to retain driving privileges for employment or medical care. Students attaining the age of 14 having accumulated 15 unexcused absences in a period of 90 calendar days must be reported to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV). To comply or reinstate license, the student must attend 30 consecutive days with no unexcused absence. The student may request a hardship waiver from the building principal. If the request is denied, the student may appeal the denial to the District Student Placement Committee. If the appeal is denied, the student may then pursue the matter through a hearing before the school board.

There have been 32 drivers license inquires from schools, parents, and students for 2007-08. Some required consultation with the DHSMV contact in Tallahassee and/or follow-up action. The inquires included clarification of the reports required by schools to be sent to DHSMV, verification of drivers license suspension status, reinstatement issues, error reports, and requests for information.

A Drivers License Manual is updated yearly for secondary school distribution. It includes information on the Florida Statutes, drivers license reporting process, waiver hearing, and clarification of school district policies regarding drivers license. The school contact

for each secondary school is updated yearly and is available to MIS and other district departments when requested.

Learnfare:

Learnfare program eligible students must be reported to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if identified by the school as either a habitual truant or dropout (section 414.1251, F.S.). This report to DCF could result in a reduction of temporary cash assistance to eligible parent(s). Learnfare program participants who receive temporary cash assistance for their eligible dependent child may have the assistance reduced if the student is identified as either a habitual truant or a dropout.

The request for Learnfare is received usually the last week of the month prior to the month reported, and Benita has less than two weeks turn-around to get the information to the School Social Workers for feedback, then prepare a report to be forwarded to MIS. A record of students identified and students recommended to be removed from sanction is maintained in Benita's office.

The following are the number of students referred for Learnfare follow-up reported for the specified months in the 2007-08 school year:

| Month | # Of Students Referred | # Of Schools Represented |
|-----------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| October | 10 | 9 |
| November | 15 | 13 |
| December | 17 | 11 |
| February | 19 | 12 |
| March | 22 | 10 |
| April/May | 40 | 23 |

Financial Assistance:

School Social Workers assist in providing financial support to students and their families through collaborative efforts with community agencies. One such partnership is with the Seabreeze United Church which provides vouchers to needy students for a new pair of shoes each school year. This past year, we were able to furnish 74 pairs of new shoes that were redeemed from the local Kmart on International Speedway Boulevard. The generous donations from the church totaled more than \$1480, making it an all-time record in the many years that they have had the shoe fund.

The 74 students receiving shoes attended the following schools: Bonner Elementary (2), Campbell Middle (3), Chisholm Elementary (1), Edgewater Public (5), Freedom Elementary (5), Holly Hill Middle (2), Indian River Elementary (3), New Smyrna Beach Middle (2), Ormond Beach Middle (3), Read-Pattillo Elementary (6), Seabreeze High (1), Silver Sands Middle (2), Small Elementary (5), Spruce Creek High (3), Sugar Mill Elementary (6), and Westside Elementary (25).

Transitional Services:

During the 2007-08 school year, the School Social Services Department continued the transitional services for students referred to Riverview Learning Center and Euclid Avenue Learning Center from other schools within the district, as well as students returning from psychiatric facilities. Prior to the 2006-07 school year, there had been students that were referred to these facilities that never entered the programs, or they entered several weeks/months later. At that time, there was no system in place to monitor students. This mechanism was put into place by our department to reduce the instructional time that students miss after being referred for expulsion.

A data base is also maintained and updated weekly of students referred for alternative education indicating referral school, grade, race/gender, ESE/504 plan, PLUS program, withdrawal date from referral school, entry date into alternative education site, and appeal information.

There were 667 students placed in alternative education for the 2007-08 school year: Euclid – 318, Riverview – 349.

Demographics

Nationality/Gender: Total of 667

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| White/male – 243 | Black/male – 155 | Hispanic/male – 67 |
| White/female – 92 | Black/female – 62 | Hispanic/female – 17 |
| Mixed/male – 16 | Asian/male – 4 | Mixed/female – 8 |
| Asian/female – 2 | American Indian/male – 1 | |

ESE: Total of 224

| |
|--------------------------------------|
| Educable Mentally Handicapped = 7 |
| Language Impaired = 5 |
| Specific Learning Disability = 111 |
| Emotional/Behavioral Disability = 68 |
| Gifted = 5 |
| Other Health Impaired = 28 |

Students by Grade:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 6 th – 63 | 10 th – 96 |
| 7 th – 131 | 11 th – 45 |
| 8 th – 135 | 12 th – 20 |
| 9 th – 177 | |

Riverview Learning Center – At the beginning of the 2007-08 academic school year, there were 22 students referred to Riverview from the previous year. When the school year began, it took those students about 2 to 3 days to enroll in school. The majority of the students (19) enrolled the first week of school. The remainder of the students did not enter due to various reasons: permanent withdrawals, enrollment in another school or program, returned to their zoned schools and/or moved out of state.

As noted above, 349 students were referred to Riverview this academic school year. Of all the students referred only 10 students did not enroll. Students averaged 7 to 10 days to set up the appointment, complete the orientation, and enter Riverview. The majority of the students progressed very well at Riverview. There was a decrease in the number of students with attendance problems the second half of the year.

There were 80 students with PLUS referrals, 10 students with 504 plans, 130 were designated ESE students, 12 were repeat referrals, and 4 students were referred from out of county. There were also 31 appeals and 27 of those were denied. The following chart shows the breakdown according to school referrals:

Students Referred to Riverview – 349

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (4941) Atlantic High – 36 | (4235) Ormond Beach Middle – 20 |
| (0745) Campbell Middle – 24 | (7891) Richard Milburn Academy – 3 |
| (7941) Community Learning Center East – 4 | (5434) Riverview (repeats) – 6 |
| (7791) Creekside Middle – 8 | (5836) Seabreeze – 39 |
| (7831) David Hinson Middle – 26 | (3431) Silver Sands Middle – 11 |
| (0835) Holly Hill Middle – 28 | (4436) Spruce Creek High – 42 |
| (3436) Mainland High – 34 | (9808) PACE – 1 |
| (3839) New Smyrna Beach High – 24 | Out of County – 4 |
| (3931) New Smyrna Beach Middle – 39 | |

Students by Race/Gender:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| White/male – 156 | Mixed/male – 6 |
| White/female – 49 | Mixed/female – 3 |
| Black/male – 87 | Asian/male – 3 |
| Black/female – 36 | Asian/female – 1 |
| Hispanic male – 8 | |

Students by Grade:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 6 th – 33 | 10 th – 51 |
| 7 th – 67 | 11 th – 27 |
| 8 th – 63 | 12 th – 8 |
| 9 th – 100 | |

Note: There were 50 students eligible to return to their zoned school for the 2008-09 school year: 6th grade – 10; 7th grade – 18; 8th grade – 14; and 9th grade – 8.

Euclid Learning Center – There were 318 students referred to Euclid. The School Social Worker assigned to Euclid monitored 126 of those students. The students averaged 5.8 days to enroll in the program once referred from expulsion. Of the 126 students, 81 successfully completed the program.

Family Services Planning Team (FSPT) Referrals – This department worked in collaboration with the Regional Care Coordinator for First Health, the Coordinator for District 12, FSPT, the Community Partnership for Children, and the SED/Network manager to develop procedures for students transitioning from psychiatric facilities. There were approximately 14 students who returned to our county from various psychiatric facilities. One School Social Worker monitors the transition of these students and provides a case summary to the appropriate social worker. The School Social Worker then makes contact with the family or student to assist them with their transition. According to the FSPT log, most of the students' anticipated start date and actual enrollment date were within five days unless their behavior worsened or the receiving facility decided not to accept them. Students needing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) had their meetings completed in less than a week. Ongoing support was provided to the individual students by the School Social Worker and/or School Psychologist.

The School Social Workers also provide follow-up services to students exiting the Hospital/Homebound program and Halifax Behavioral Services.

Rilya Wilson Act:

The Rilya Wilson Act (section 39.604, F.S.) requires that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the community-based care lead agency notify operators of licensed early education or child care programs, including all school district programs, when designated children are enrolled in their program. These measures are designed as an additional safeguard to insure the safety of children between the ages of three and kindergarten entry age who are under court-ordered protective supervision or in the custody of the Family Safety Program of DCF or a community-based care lead agency.

The Department of Education requires that school districts report each unexcused absence or seven consecutive excused absences of children covered by this Act to the local staff of the Family Safety Program of DCF or the community-based care lead agency by the end of the following business day. Consistent with the requirements of the Act, DCF or the community-based care lead agency conducts a home visit upon receiving two consecutive reports of unexcused absences or a report of seven consecutive excused absences.

The School Social Services Coordinator's office maintains a database of student attendance. A daily report is sent to Community Partnership for Children each day. During the 2007-08 school year, 1010 entries were recorded representing 121 students at 38 elementary schools, one charter school, and the county office. The following numbers represent the breakdown of the entries recorded: 555 excused absences, 358 unexcused absences, 40 corrections of absences (unexcused to excused), and 57 other entries (student holidays, no students reported, and/or spring and winter breaks).

Safe and Drug-Free Schools:

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant program is federally funded through Title IV, Part A, of the No Child Left Behind Act. This program is a cornerstone of youth drug prevention and intervention efforts within the State of Florida. Programs provided through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant for the 2007-08 school year included the following: BRIDGES, Project PASS, PLUS program, Project Alert, Too Good for Drugs, and Bully-Proofing Your Schools.

BRIDGES (Building Respect, Independence, Development, and Growth Through Extended Services) is a program built on cooperation and collaboration between parents, schools, and Family Support services, and addresses escalating behaviors or at-risk issues of identified youth. This comprehensive family-based program is designed to address the needs and problems of families and youth. BRIDGES assists parents and youth by encouraging independence, responsibility, mutual respect, cooperation, self-confidence, self-esteem, and democratic relationships, all of which promote positive behavior, attitudes, and success at home, school, and in the community.

Project PASS, which is provided under the BRIDGES program, is aimed at younger students with behavior problems. There is a parent education component along with social skills training for third, fourth, and fifth grade students. It was offered at target school sites on a case-by-case basis this past school year.

PLUS (Preventing, Learning, and Understanding Substances) is a school-based prevention, early intervention, and case management program designed to help students understand the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. PLUS goals include increasing students' knowledge about the dangers of drugs/alcohol, improving their decision-making abilities and attitudes, and preventing/eliminating drug or alcohol use. Referrals for PLUS services may come from students, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, administrators, or parents. Services are provided to students, primarily through individual or small group discussions. Classroom presentations are also offered to students upon request of teachers or school administrators.

There are seven PLUS Caseworkers who hold Certified Addiction Prevention Professional (CAPP) certification and use proven and effective, research-based curriculum. For the 2007-08 school year, there were 906 PLUS referrals received; 787 assessments completed; 401 students seen individually; 211 students participated in groups; and 1467 students participated in the classroom. We partnered with the People for Drug-Free Youth and Burns Oak Hill Elementary School to offer a four-week "Drug-Proofing Your Kids" parenting series. Another two series were offered at Our Lady of Lourdes and in the Port Orange Community. The "Drug-Proofing Your Kids" workshops were a great success.

Referrals are made to community agencies when it is determined that further assessment, counseling, or treatment services may be needed. Cost, if any, for the services is determined by the agency or service provider and is the responsibility of the parent.

Project Alert is a nationally recognized substance abuse program targeted towards middle school students. The program gives students skills for resisting substance abuse. Project Alert successfully addresses tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants, which are the substances teens are most likely to use.

Several School Social Workers and Guidance Counselors were trained earlier in the year and some implemented the program in various schools. At Taylor Middle/High School, there were 108 sixth grade students who participated in eight sessions conducted by Benita, Beth, and Dorothy from October through December. There are eleven sessions in Project Alert and it was reconfigured into eight sessions conducted during the PE classes from first through sixth periods. The class sizes ranged from sixteen to thirty-six students. Pre and post tests were completed by students. The sessions consisted of lecture, video presentation, and group participation.

This year, Project Alert was evaluated by an external team with expertise in measurement and evaluation of school-based programs (Dr. M. David Miller) and counseling and substance abuse (Dr. Candace Hodgkins, LMHC). The team determined that Project Alert is functioning successfully as a program for resisting substance abuse. The program is successful as a prevention program, but is not intended as an intervention program when substance abuse occurs. Therefore, the emphasis is on understanding consequences, having high resistance self-efficacy, and preventing increases in drug use. As a result, the primary evidence for their conclusion is:

- Students showed an increased knowledge of the consequences of drug use
- Students started with a high level of resistance self-efficacy and maintained that level throughout the program
- Students showed no increases in drug use behaviors

Interviews with Project Alert staff also helped to examine the problems with the program. Based on staff interviews, we reached the following recommendations for improvement:

1. Proven programs work best when used as designed. This means that the full program should be implemented for maximum benefit. Due to time constraints, students often received only a portion of Project Alert. Consequently they may not have experienced the full benefit of the program.
2. Project Alert was developed for middle school students. Interviews suggested that the program should be implemented at grades six and seven only. It did not capture the attention of the eighth grade students. Implementation of the program at the high school level was problematic.
3. Staff suggested that the message of the program was not strong enough for marijuana use. Additional curriculum would be needed to supplement this and it would require additional time.
4. The program ran most effectively with supportive teachers working with the Project Alert staff. It could have a greater impact if teachers were persuaded to be more supportive of the program.

Too Good for Drugs (TGFD) is a comprehensive alcohol, tobacco, and drug-prevention program that promotes positive norms for healthy, drug-free living in kindergarten through fifth grades. TGFD is an in-depth school-based drug prevention/education program designed to teach students that they are "*too good*" for drugs. Students are equipped with knowledge, proactive support, positive role models, clear boundaries, and high expectations. Research has shown that these skills are building blocks for healthy development.

The Bully-Proofing Your School (BPYS) program focuses on creating safe and caring school communities where children feel connected. A "caring majority" has the power to overcome bullying behaviors. This caring majority is made up of all members of the school community – students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents – working together to create an environment that feels supportive to everyone. There are four basic concepts that form the basis of the BPYS program.

1. Systemic, comprehensive program
 - School-wide commitment to non-tolerance for bullying
 - Development of school-wide rules and expectations
 - School-wide commitment to creating a caring community
 - All systems are involved (administration, teachers, students, support staff, transportation, community liaisons)
2. Main focus on climate change
 - Designed to create a positive, pro-social school climate
 - Commitment is to broaden cultural change
 - Program is viewed as a process of gradual change
3. Teaches skills and strategies to avoid victimization
 - Introduces a common vocabulary to be used system-wide
 - Skills include how to take a stand for self and others
 - Emphasizes concept of taking responsibility for each other
 - Develops skills of problem-solving and community building
4. Emphasis on developing the caring majority
 - Goal is to shift power away from the bullies to the silent majority members
 - Focus is on empowering and mobilizing the silent majority to become the caring majority
 - The caring majority is the foundation of the caring school environment

There are ten basic elements that a school, optimally, should have in place in order for the Bully-Proofing program to succeed:

1. Staff acknowledgement of the problem of bullying and their commitment to the creation of a safe school
2. Administrative support for the problem
3. School-wide discipline plan in place

4. Bully-Proofing Cadre formed to design and guide implementation for the program
5. Assessment of current school climate and safety issues
6. Training of staff
7. Training of students – classroom curriculum
8. Support from the parent community
9. Strategies for ongoing development of the caring community principles (1-4 above)
10. Evaluation of the program

Home Education:

Home education is a parent-directed educational choice established by law in Florida in 1985. The law is broad, giving parents considerable freedom to direct their child's education. It is an alternative option to meeting the compulsory school attendance law. Parents wishing to homeschool their children may do so under section 1002.41, F.S. or by registering with a non-public school established for homeschooling purposes.

Consultation with the District Home Education Contact Person is available for parents who are just beginning to consider Home Education as an option for their child. School personnel may also consult with the Home Education Office regarding ongoing questions that arise with homeschooling issues.

Some of the duties that are provided by our District Home Education Contact Person are listed below.

W24 Follow-up

75 YTD (73 in 06-07; 48 in 05-06)

The home education office contacts parents of students that have withdrawn from school with the intention to homeschool, if the child has not officially registered as a homeschooler within 30 days. If the District Home Education Contact Person is unable to make contact, a referral to the appropriate School Social Worker may be initiated as a last resort.

Evaluation Non-Compliance Follow-up

146 YTD (110 in 06-07; 70 in 05-06)

Each month, the Home Education Office contacts parents to ensure that they have submitted their child's annual educational evaluation. A letter is sent to the family giving them a 30-day extension for submission of the required evaluation. Following the letter, the Home Education Office may attempt to make telephone contact. If the parent cannot be reached via telephone, a home visit may be necessary. The Home Education Contact Person may refer the case to the School Social Worker of the respective zoned school if contact has been unsuccessful. Once all efforts to obtain the evaluation have been exhausted, charges may be filed against the parent for non-compliance with the attendance law. Students who are at least 14 years of age may be referred to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) for suspension or non-issuance of a student's drivers license or learners license.

Students Referred to DHSMV (16 & over)

86 YTD (55 in 06-07; 38 in 05-06)

Students who are non-compliant with the evaluation requirement and 30-day extension and are 16 years of age and over, are referred to the DHSMV for suspension of their

driving privilege. The non-compliance cases are not referred to the School Social Worker for follow-up.

Miscellaneous/General Questions 138 YTD (100 in 06-07; 16 in 05-06 mainly reflected complicated cases)

Many parents call requesting practical assistance with starting their home education program. A variety of issues also arise with home education students including anonymous calls regarding their educational status, custody issues, DCF referrals and Child Labor Law waiver requests. Many times consultation with other district level staff is necessary to properly answer the questions.

Portfolio Review Follow-up 38 YTD (32 in 06-07; 17 in 05-06)

Students who have exhibited a pattern of non-attendance in school prior to registering in home education may be required to participate in monthly portfolio reviews. Parents are given monthly appointments and asked to bring in samples of their child's completed work. Parents are given three chances to bring in the required work samples before being terminated for non-compliance with this requirement. Once terminated, the student may not homeschool again for 180 calendar days.

Partial Enrollment 55 YTD (42 in 06-07; 35 in 05-06)

Students who are registered homeschoolers with Volusia County Schools are eligible for partial enrollment for academic courses or extracurricular activities participation at the middle and high school levels. A variety of questions arise from parents and school personnel regarding this opportunity. All students must formally initiate their request for partial enrollment participation and be approved through the Home Education Office.

FCAT Participation 22 YTD (36 in 06-07; 14 in 05-06)

Students who are registered homeschoolers with Volusia County Schools are eligible for participation in FCAT testing at their zoned school provided they register through the Home Education Office. Parents may have a variety of questions and requests regarding their testing site or specific accommodations for their child. The ESE Department coordinates accommodations for those students who have existing IEPs.

Requests for ESE Testing 14 YTD (24 in 06-07; 13 in 05-06)

Parents of students who are registered homeschoolers with Volusia County Schools may request ESE testing and services. All parents are referred to their zoned school SST Chairperson for help with the referral process. The District Home Education Contact Person contacts the identified school to alert them to the parent request. The only ESE service available to home education students is speech/language services. The home education student must return to public school full-time to access any other ESE services.

Requests from School Contacts 34 YTD (28 in 06-07; did not capture in 05-06)

School administrators and guidance counselors often have specific questions related to home education, usually regarding grade placement. Many times consultation with other district level staff is necessary to properly answer more complicated issues.

Florida Virtual School Requests 56 YTD (54 in 06-07; did not capture in 05-06)

Parents call throughout the year inquiring about how they can access Florida Virtual School (FLVS) for their middle or high school curriculum. FLVS will not accommodate homeschoolers unless they are properly registered with VCS.

Referral to School Social Workers

33 YTD

When the District Home Education Contact cannot make contact with parents by phone, usually regarding W24 or annual evaluation non-compliance follow-up, the students are referred to the appropriate School Social Workers.

Difficult Cases

26 YTD

Difficult cases are defined as situations that involve complicated student/family circumstances and require numerous telephone calls or consultation with other school personnel.

Bright Futures

5 YTD

Homeschooled students applying for Bright Futures need verification that they were properly registered with school district and in good standing during their eleventh and twelfth grade years.

FHSAA EL7 Requests

40 YTD

Students who are requesting to play sports either within the public school system or with a private school require verification of proper registration and good standing status in homeschool.

Child Labor

3 YTD

Information regarding Child Labor Law regulations is provided to homeschool students who are inquiring about an exemption.

Professional Development Training:

According to our NASW Standards, "Because of the changing nature of the field of social work and education, School Social Workers have a professional responsibility for the continued development of their knowledge and skills and for remaining current in their field." School Social Workers/PLUS Caseworkers must engage in effective professional learning every day to assist in student achievement and improve the learning of all students. Staff development organizes professional learning communities with goals that are aligned with those of the school and district. There are six areas of focus that the staff members actively support: Academic Excellence, Access and Equity, High Performing Instructional and Non-Instructional Staff, Involved Family and Community, Safe and Orderly Environment, and Effective Operations. Best practices reflecting these areas of focus were developed utilizing effective research and national standards.

The services provided in this department are delivered in collaboration with other educators as part of school-based teams. School Social Workers or PLUS Caseworkers may serve as members of specific teams or may serve as leaders/facilitators. They also provide supervision for new social workers and interns. (See attached compilation of staff development trainings and activities.)

Social Worker Identification:

Effective July 1, 2008, House Bill 35 amended the Clinical, Counseling, and Psychotherapy Services Act to create the definition of "social worker" to mean a person who has a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree in social work. The bill provides that it

shall be a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable by imprisonment or fine, for a person, for or without compensation, to hold himself or herself out to the public as a social worker either directly or through a governmental or private organization, entity, or agency unless that person possesses at least a bachelors or masters degree in social work.

Parent Satisfaction Surveys:

A parent satisfaction survey is completed after a Social and Developmental History interview is conducted with parents or guardians. The survey gathers feedback regarding the interview process, parent understanding of the evaluative process, organization of the worker, and ability of the worker to communicate the need for the social history. The data is reviewed by the coordinator to determine areas of strength and areas of improvement. During the 2007-08 school year, over 200 parents completed the surveys giving a rating of "very satisfied" on almost every question asked. The following are a small sampling of the comments provided:

- The social worker was very concerned about my child.
- The social worker was pleasant and kind.
- The social worker helped me find out about other school options for my son.
- The social worker conducted herself in a very professional manner.
- The social worker made me feel very comfortable about the process.
- The social worker was very patient with me in allowing me to explain different things.
- The social worker is an asset to the school system; very knowledgeable in her field.
- The social worker took the time to get to know my child in an effort to address her many needs.
- The social worker gave me ideas about things I had not thought about before.
- The social worker gave us a new direction and reason to be hopeful.

According to our ESE and Student Services Division, the Florida Department of Education began mailing a survey in May 2008 to parents of children receiving special education services in order to determine how well schools are supporting parents' involvement in their child's education. Parents have a choice of completing the survey on paper or online. All responses are confidential. The survey is sent to all parents of preschool children with disabilities, all parents of K-12 students with disabilities in small districts, and a sample of parents of K-12 students with disabilities in large districts (i.e., Volusia County).

The results of the survey will be reported to the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, as part of Florida's Annual Performance Report and posted on the Florida Department of Education's web site at www.fldoe.org/ese. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states must report this information to the federal government on an annual basis. Improvement activities are determined based on the survey report and progress is monitored through the annual parent survey.

Department Evaluation Tools:

The measurement tools used in evaluating the department programs are both formal and informal. Tools include standardized instruments, observations in the classroom and school environment, parent, student, and teacher interviews, home visits, and locally developed tools. Here is a list of some of the tools used: Attendance Membership reports, MIS reports, Florida School Indicator reports, Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, Project Success Implementation checklists and logs, American Drug/Alcohol Survey, PLUS program pre-and post-tests, Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers (POSIT), Colorado BPYS Climate Survey, TGFD Student Survey, teacher lesson implementation logs and surveys, parent surveys, and consultant evaluation.

This department continues to examine methods of measuring outcomes of student success that result from the many services we provide. The majority of services provided by this department are support services as described in the initial sections of this report. The district analysis data supports the fact that our major role is actually non-ESE services (35.1% of services were provided to ESE students). The majority of contacts by the School Social Workers are with school staff, followed by contacts with students and/or parents. Although they do refer students to community resources when appropriate, School Social Workers are providing direct services, counseling, skills training, and other services as outlined.

During the course of this school year, the Leadership Committee starting using the district's strategic plan as a starting point for developing our own departmental plan which will match the district goals to our duties. All staff members have been trained on data collection methods and have begun defining our outcomes in measurable terms.

The School Social Workers/PLUS Caseworkers are some of the most qualified in our community for providing social work services. Most of the staff have a Masters Degree in Social Work and about one-third are licensed by the State of Florida as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and/or Licensed Mental Health Worker.

The data and feedback from schools support the statement that our staff members provide services that increase student academic engaged time for those identified as "at risk" in the No Child Left Behind legislation. School Social Workers and PLUS Caseworkers continue to play an integral role in the district's aim to ensure the highest student achievement for each student. We increase the amount of academic engaged time for all students and in particular for those students identified as at-risk. We contribute greatly to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment. We serve as ongoing liaisons between the home, school, and the community. The data collected are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the frequency with which a School Social Worker/PLUS Caseworker is used in our system to support students, families, and schools. Outcomes can be difficult to measure quantitatively because the very nature of the services we provide are qualitative in nature. During the 2008-09 school year we plan to develop strategic plan for this department. We will revise our departmental procedure manual and post it and the strategic plan on our website for easy access. This department remains committed to the quality of services we provide. We intend to collaborate with families, schools, and the community to increase academic engaged time, resulting in higher academic achievement for all students in a safe learning environment.

Top Ten Reasons for Being a School Social Worker/Plus Caseworker

1. Career of Champions
2. World Class Peers
3. Satisfaction Guaranteed
4. Make the World a Better Place
5. Change the Future
6. Match Wits With Life's Challenges
7. Foster Success Stories
8. Practice Your Principles
9. Do What Counts
10. Help People



National Association of Social Workers

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Sincerely,

Dianne C. Martin-Morgan, MSW
Coordinator, School Social Services / SDFS