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The Georgia APEX program: School-Based Mental Health Services

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THE GEORGIA APEX PROGRAM: SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

YEAR 2 EVALUATION FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' Georgia Apex Program creates partnerships between community-based mental health providers and local schools to provide school-based mental health (SBMH) services.

In partnership with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health, housed in the Georgia Health Policy Center at Georgia State University, conducted an evaluation of the second year of the Georgia Apex Program and provided technical assistance to each of the community-based mental health providers. Using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses, the evaluation measured program performance, identified technical assistance needs, and investigated facilitators and barriers to program's success and sustainability.

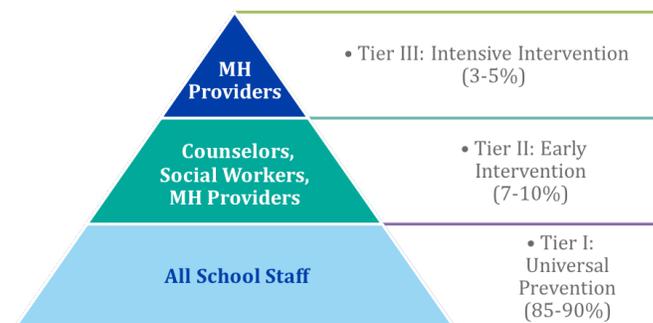
Program Goals



The program's goals include

1. Increasing access to mental health services for children and youth,
2. Providing early detection of child and adolescent mental health needs, and
3. Increasing coordination between community-based mental health providers and the local schools and school districts they serve.

The APEX Triangle



Adapted from: Bieber B, Hotchkiss & Palmer, B. (2007). A Guide to School Mental Health Services. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

Year 2 by the Numbers

- **29** community-based mental health providers
- **203** schools served
- **92%** retention rate of schools from year 1 to year 2
- **2,822** students served who had not previously received mental health services
- **235** average number of first-time students served each month
- **21** average number of students served per school
- **40,044** services provided in schools
- **11,377** referrals made to Apex services



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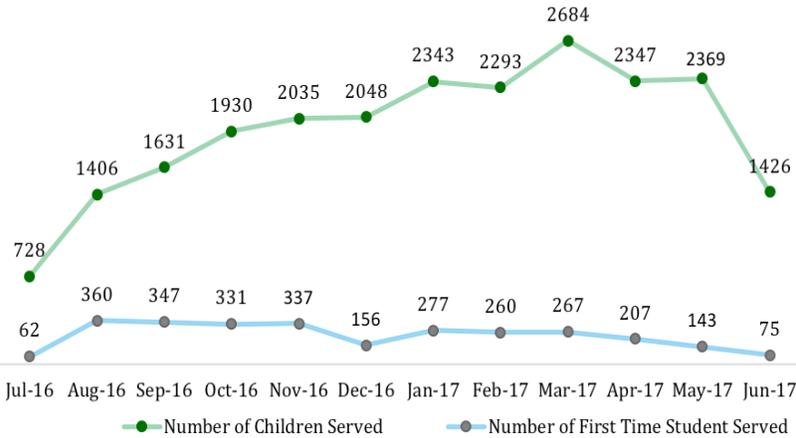


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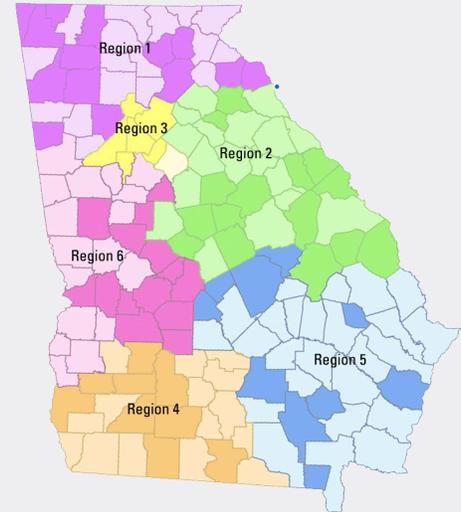
GEORGIA APEX PROGRAM IMPACT

Twenty-nine community-based mental health providers began administering Apex programs in August 2015. By the end of year 1, the program reached 136 schools and delivered 20,000 services. During year 2, the Apex Program served 203 schools and provided 40,044 services.

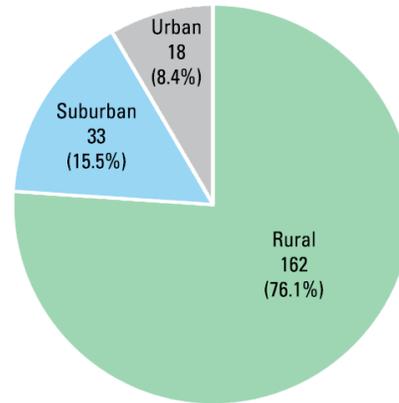
Total Number of Students Served



By June 2017, the Apex program served 203 schools across 66 counties, as seen in the darker shaded areas.



Geography of Apex Schools



To prioritize serving in geographic areas with unmet needs, community-based mental health providers continue to partner with schools in more rural settings.

The Apex Year-End Survey aids in compiling critical contextual information about the schools served, implementation of the program, and successes and challenges related to billing, sustainability, and collaborative relationships. The following themes emerged.

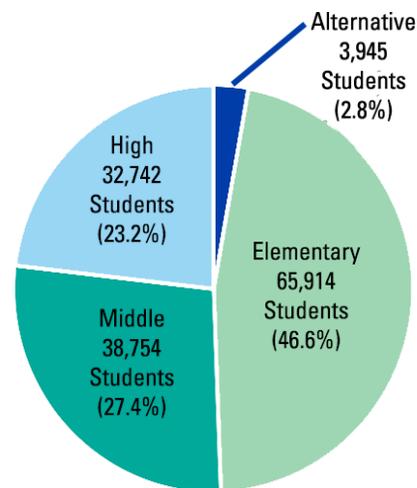
IDENTIFIED SUCCESSES INCLUDE

- Integration into partnering schools
- Improved coordination and communication between providers and school staff
- Increased access to services for students otherwise not receiving needed help

COMMON CHALLENGES INCLUDE

- Navigating care management organization requirements (e.g., billing, staff credentialing, timely authorization for services)
- Difficulties in scheduling time with students during the school day
- Lack of support and investment from leaders

Type of Schools Served by the Apex Program



Community-based mental health providers are encouraged to partner with elementary and middle schools in order to make services available to students at a younger age.

Activities that were helpful to position the program toward sustainability, include provider integration in the school setting (e.g., participating in school events and serving as a resource to school staff through trainings, crisis intervention, and lunch-and-learns), providing quality care to the students, and using data to demonstrate the