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2-10-2020

## The Georgia APEX program: School-Based Mental Health Services

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Health Policy Center, "The Georgia APEX program: School-Based Mental Health Services" (2020). *GHPC Briefs*. 157.

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# THE GEORGIA APEX PROGRAM: SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

August 2018

## Program 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 services. The program began as a pilot in August 2015 and is now entering its fourth year (school year 2018-2019).



The program's goals include:

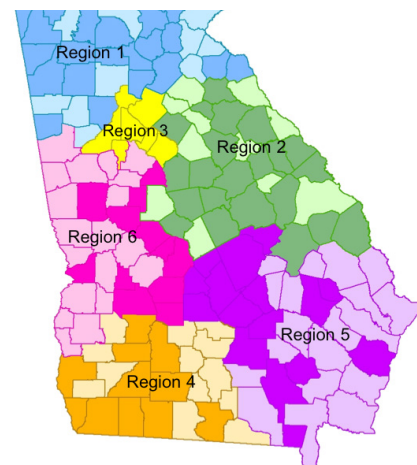
- Increasing access to mental health services for children and youth
- Providing early detection of child and adolescent mental health needs
- Increasing coordination between community-based mental health providers and local schools

## Reach of Apex Schools

The Apex Program has experienced a considerable amount of growth over the last three years.

As of June 2018:

- More than half of Georgia counties have at least one Apex school
- Approximately one in six Georgia schools participates in Apex
- Nearly three-quarters of Apex schools are elementary and middle schools, supporting the program's goals of early detection and intervention



Darker-shaded counties have at least one Apex school.

## Apex Outcomes

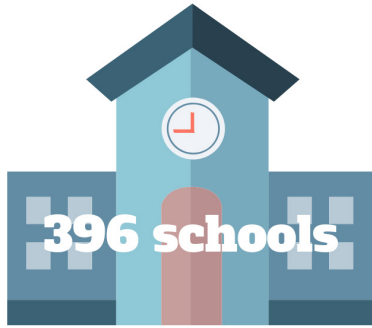
The Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health, housed in the Georgia Health Policy Center at Georgia State University, in partnership with the Office of Children, Young Adults and Families in the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, conducts ongoing evaluation of the Georgia Apex Program and provides technical assistance to the community-based mental health providers.



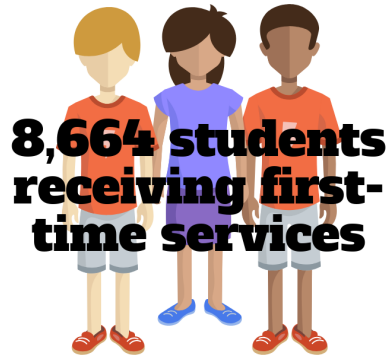
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- 85% retention
- 154% increase from Year 1 to Year 3



- 42% increase in students receiving first-time services from Year 1 to Year 3



- 166% increase in services provided in schools from Year 1 to Year 3

From August 2015 to June 2018 (program Year 1 to Year 3), Apex demonstrated substantial increases in access to care based on the number of schools participating and the number of students receiving services, including first-time recipients of services. Delivered services include behavioral health and diagnostic assessments; crisis intervention; psychiatric treatment; community support; and individual, family, and outpatient services.

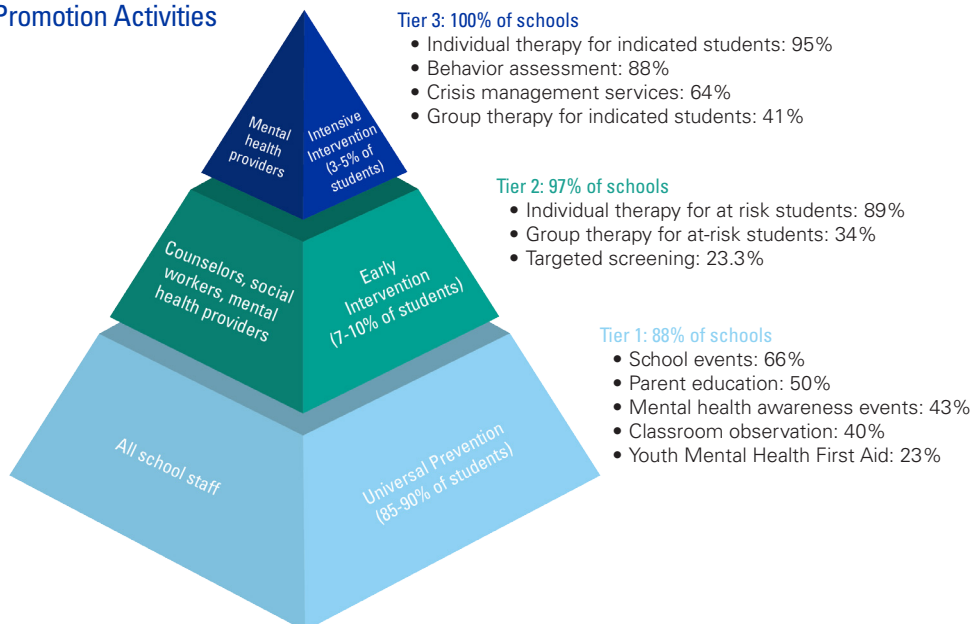
Apex schools and schools implementing both Apex and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports saw greater increases in average School Climate Star ratings, including the Safe and Substance Free Environment scores, compared to all schools statewide from 2015 to 2017.

Additionally, Apex schools showed significantly greater decreases from 2015 through 2017 in average number of discipline incidents and out-of-school suspensions per school, compared to statewide data.

### Mental Health Promotion Within Apex Schools

Apex prioritizes addressing the need for intensive intervention for students identified as living with mental health concerns — the top tier of the pyramid. Apex providers also work with schools on additional mental health promotion activities across Tiers 1 and 2 of the pyramid below.

#### Mental Health Promotion Activities



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

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