



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU
FROM: Behavioral Health Advisory Committee
DATE: July 22, 2020
RE: **Presentation to Finance on Behavioral Health Program Fund - School Services**

The Health Department will provide a report from the Behavioral Health Program Fund to the County Council Finance Committee on August 5, 2020. The Behavioral Health Program Fund, made possible by local sales tax dollars, has been essential in responding to the continued needs of the community.

The focus of this report is on mental health and substance abuse services provided to youth and families through school-based contracts. The provided report highlights services provided by the seven school districts in Whatcom County during the 2019/20 school year. While some districts continue to offer summer services, this report covers the September through June academic year.

Services delivered through the schools have continued to support critical areas of the PITA (Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Aftercare) continuum of care for both mental health and substance abuse. In collaboration with the County, each school district designed their services to meet their unique local needs.

School-based services were very successful in reaching, and impacting, many youth and their families during this past school year. This includes serving over 1,246 youth through targeted services, and reaching nearly 8,000 community members through trainings and community events. Outcomes from these efforts have shown positive reductions in substance use, conduct problems, and skipping school, as well as in demonstrating improved functioning, communication, and healthy bonding opportunities. These services continued during school closures resulting from the pandemic, and provided essential support through a time of elevated isolation and growing concerns with anxiety and depression.

The schools continue to be an effective vehicle for the delivery of Behavioral Health services throughout Whatcom County. Many school districts reach parts of the county where limited services exist. In fact, 78% of the services provided to individuals and families were outside of Bellingham city limits.

The Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC) continues to meet regularly to understand the needs of the community, review and make recommendations on funding strategies and program priorities, and support an infrastructure that provides quality care in Whatcom County.

