

Our Mission

Community Agency School Services (CASS) Coordinators create solutions and opportunities to address factors that impact the wellbeing and success of FCPS students by collaborating with families, schools, and communities to connect students and families to the resources they need.

Background

CASS is a program of the Student Services Department of Frederick County Public Schools. Since 1991, the CASS program has supported student success by identifying and promoting access to interventions that address barriers to student achievement and increase support for healthy development. This year, the number of CASS Coordinators was increased from four to ten. This investment in the behavioral health of FCPS students allowed for the assignment of a CASS Coordinator to each feeder, and broadened the focus from middle schools to include high schools. In addition, CASS added a direct service component to their traditional role of facilitating resource linkages. CASS Coordinators now also provide direct crisis counseling and bridge support for vulnerable middle and high school students, particularly those on waiting lists for community therapists.

CASS Coordinators also facilitate formal partnerships between selected community behavioral health services agencies and FCPS. This partnership allows students to access approved therapists from these agencies within schools during the school day, removing significant barriers that would otherwise limit many students' abilities to receive mental health treatment. Partnerships also include consents to exchange information, enhancing coordination of care for the student.

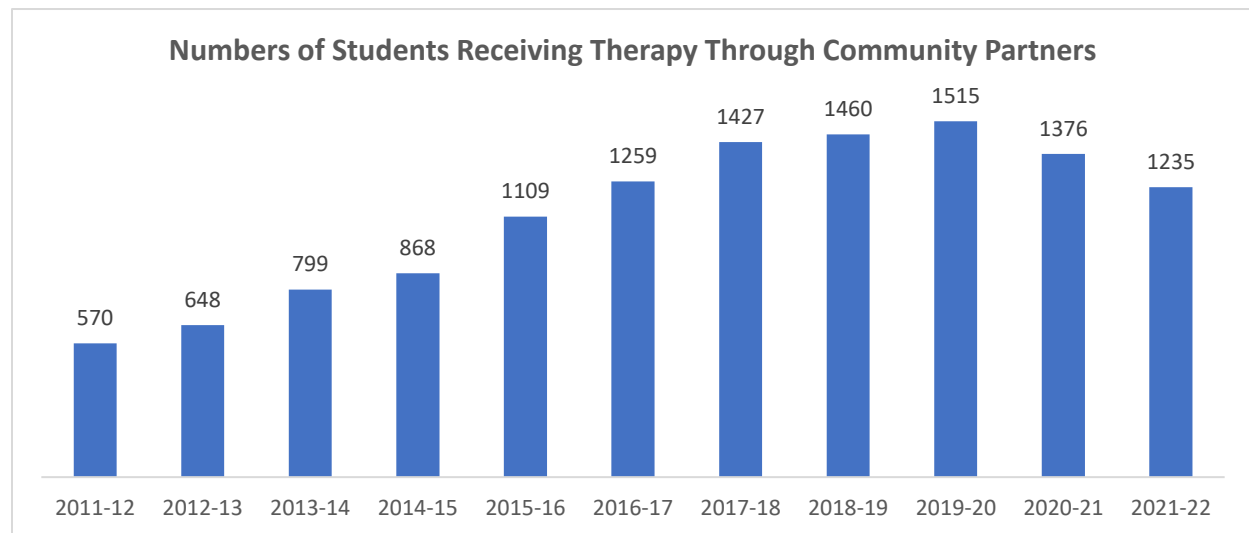
Over the past two years, pandemic-related stressors have significantly impacted the mental health of both children and adults in Frederick County, resulting in waiting lists for treatment and a shortage of available therapists. CASS responded by obtaining grants for contract trauma therapists to serve FCPS students and by employing the approved FCPS Request for Proposals (RFP) process to increase the number of behavioral health partner agencies serving students in FCPS schools. During the 2021-22 school year, the following agencies participated in the partnership: Advanced Behavioral Health; Sheppard Pratt; THRIVE; and the Child Advocacy Center. Added to these for the upcoming year will be: Key Therapeutic Solutions; Quality One Care Home Health Services; New Vision Counseling Center; and the Orenda Center of Wellness, doubling the number of agencies in the partnership.

Services

This year, CASS Coordinators directly served **377 middle and high school students** in need of support and connected with **935 families**, impacting an additional **1471 children** in the district. CASS Coordinators provided **1633 individual contacts with students and 5787 individual contacts with caregivers**.

Through CASS-facilitated partnerships, community behavioral health service agencies provided individual therapy to 1235 FCPS students via 70 therapists, a value of over \$6,161,700 in services provided at no cost to FCPS.

Of note is the apparent difference in numbers of students receiving therapy through the partnership this year as compared to the previous four years. The influence of the pandemic has made it impossible for the first time since 2011-12 to create a direct “apples to apples” comparison with previous years. For instance, at the onset of pandemic-necessitated school closures, FCPS students accessing therapy through the partnership moved from face to face sessions to teletherapy. When in-person learning resumed this year, many students never transitioned back from teletherapy to school-based services, and thus were not reflected in CASS partnership service counts, which begin anew July 1 of every year. Further, agency partners reported significant challenges with recruiting and retaining therapists and addressing waiting lists as they worked to keep up with demand for treatment. By April 2022, most students seeking school-based treatment were waitlisted.



In addition to individual therapy, twenty-nine support/counseling groups were convened by CASS in partnership with local groups such as Frederick Health Hospice and the Girl Scouts of America, serving 248 students.

The table below provides service information showing the numbers of individuals served including numbers of contacts and types of services CASS Coordinators offered.

STUDENTS	Number	FAMILIES	Number
Unduplicated students	377	Unduplicated families	935
Total contacts with students	1633	Total contacts with caregivers	5787
Students receiving counseling	172	Children impacted by services	1471

Students receiving crisis support	206	Families receiving crisis support	124
Students on caseload linked to mental health treatment	142	Families linked to mental health treatment	685
Students linked to substance use treatment	4	Families linked to substance use treatment	17
Students linked to academic support	59	Families linked to academic support	131
Students linked to after school activities	12	Families linked to after school activities`	87
Students linked to housing resources	8	Families linked to housing resources	63
Students linked to food resources	7	Families linked to food resources	53
Students linked to transportation	19	Families linked to transportation	25
Students participating in group counseling	248	Families linked to utilities resources	22

Stakeholder Satisfaction

CASS surveys parents/guardians of students served by the agency partners every two years, providing the agencies with electronic and paper surveys to share with the families of the students they serve through this partnership so that they have an opportunity to express opinions about the services. This was a survey year, and 150 individuals responded to the survey, providing the following information:

- 93% of respondents said it was easy (27%) or very easy (66%) to set up counseling services for their child.
- 96% of respondents agreed (39.33%) or strongly agreed (56.67%) that counseling services made a positive difference in their child's life.
- 95% of respondents agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (53%) that counseling services made a positive difference in their family.
- Although 73% of respondents stated their child would have had access to counseling services if they were not available at school or through telehealth, over one quarter (27%) reported their child would not have access to counseling if it weren't available at school or through telehealth. Parent work schedule was the most frequently cited barrier, followed by transportation, family obligations, and agency office hours.

Sixty-two respondents provided comments, including these:

- *"I've seen my daughter go from not wanting to wake up to do anything to wanting to do everything. She's communicating so much more than she was before."*
- *"These counseling services have really helped my child with his behavior."*
- *"I appreciate that counseling at school for my child is an option, it has helped my child and myself."*

CASS also surveyed school administrators and school mental health professionals regarding satisfaction with CASS services, receiving 87 surveys providing the following results:

- 97% of respondents said their CASS Coordinator was highly responsive to requests for support for students, and 95% said their CASS Coordinator was highly responsive to requests for support for parents/families.
- 95% of respondents said their CASS Coordinator connects well with parents and 94% said their CASS Coordinator connects well with students.
- 93% said their CASS Coordinator was easy to reach when needed.

Sample comments from this survey included:

- “I will often talk with parents and if they indicate they would like more resources to help their child I will ask them if our CASS person can call them. She has done this numerous times this year. Especially to help parents connect with therapy. She is a wonderful resource for our school and has been very responsive to reaching out to our parents who need further resources.”
- “She has been exceptionally supportive of a number of challenging students and has made strong connections with staff. I have worked closely with her and she has shown how valuable CASS is in supporting the diverse needs of our students.”
- “CASS is a valuable resource that we need more of.”