Mission

* To promote comprehensive SBMH programs throughout Arkansas
* To ensure quality, accountability and professionalism
* To foster partnerships among educators, mental health professionals and the community
* To enhance the wellbeing of all Arkansas students

Parting Words From Our President:

It has been an honor to work with a group of people who have dedicated their lives to improving the hearts and giving hope to children and families with mental health needs. In the past two years ARMEA has developed into an organization that continues to educate, promote, and embrace School Based Mental Health Services for all children in Arkansas. We have met with the Governor, had multiple contacts with legislators, held town meetings, wrote grants, held workshops, and advocated for mental health services and funding for children with the Arkansas Children’s Behavioral Health Care Commission.

Currently, our funds have been significantly reduced by the Arkansas Department of Education. Thankfully we have received Stimulus Funds to keep our therapists in their schools until December 2011. By that time we hope to have successfully worked with the Division of Behavioral Health, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Medicaid Division, Arkansas Department of Education and our government officials to allow a funding stream that would support our programs.

There are many expenditures from our tax dollars in Arkansas, but by far, this initiative is one that should be a priority for all.

Debra Swink is ARMEA’s new president and she is an asset to our STATE in promoting Mental Health Programs in Schools. ARMEA will continue to grow under her experienced leadership. The ARMEA Board is instrumental in continuing these services for children and families and a special thank you for your work for all of us!!

Patti Allison

System of Care Reform

Marches On

Governor Beebe’s Arkansas Children’s Behavioral Health Care Commission continues to review our current systems of care for the youth and their families in Arkansas. Track their progress, give your input and check out their calendar of events at:

Arkansas Mental Health in Education Association

Welcome 2009-2010 Board!

Patti Allison, MSE, LPC—Past President
Deborah Swink, MSE—President
Ruth Fissel, LCSW—President-Elect
Deanna DeWitt, LCSW—Vice-President
Morgan Elliott—Secretary
Tony Boaz, LCSW—Treasurer
Sandy Daniels—Historian
Vickie Kingston, MSE—Conference Chair
Shelly Hink—Newsletter

ARMEA’s New Website
http://www.arkansasmalthealthineducation.org
You can find membership training/conference information, as well as membership applications. Please remember all membership dues are to be renewed July 1, 2009.

SARA PASSES
SARA (Student Assessment and Referral Application) has provided a foundation for the collection of school-based mental health data for the past 5 years. Each year we make updates that help us to refine our data collection and to review statewide progress of students receiving services.

Our goal is to evaluate student outcomes: attendance, behavior and academics, so that we can prove program effectiveness. Being able to show that our programs are working, helps to promote program growth, garner support from decision makers and ultimately, place districts in a position to secure funding for their SBMH programs.

In the past, districts have looked to the state for feedback on outcomes. This school year, we have upgraded SARA so that districts can run their own outcome reports and have immediate feedback on individual student progress as well as overall district progress.

If you are already accessing SARA, please take a look at the new report and let us know what you think. If you are not currently signed up for SARA, then please contact me, Ruth Fissel at ruthfissel@comcast.net or by phone at 501-537-2200.

Arkansas SBMH Programs--
Mental Health District Employed Providers or Contracted Agency Providers?

SOME FACTS
Schools in Arkansas continue to find ways to implement school based mental health services (SBMH) that will address targeted issues found within learning environments. Emotional and behavioral problems have been identified as key barriers to teaching and learning (Adelman et al., 1999). Many times, schools and educators nationwide are uniformed about the most effective and best practice approaches at developing programs that will service the mental health needs of students. In Arkansas, it appears that schools can either hire their own mental health providers or contract with agency providers. Some Arkansas schools also do a mix of these service modalities.
In recent research, a study was conducted to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between different modalities of service (modalities meaning if they are agency contracted or school district employed) and factors of effectiveness. For the purpose of the study, factors of effectiveness included hours of service, cost factors, and educator satisfaction. The results were consistent with the findings noted by Slade (2002) that suggest services are highly variable across schools. Eight Arkansas school districts participated in this study and the results have been broken down by the factor of effectiveness.

**HOURS OF SERVICE**

Results indicated that agency contracted services provide more indirect services than that of school districts that hire their own service provider. One explanation of these findings may be that school district employed service providers do not have the time to provide collateral indirect services due to the overwhelming responsibility to meet the direct service needs. In addition, district employed service providers may not document these services as a service at all, but merely as a part of their everyday job considering they are an employee of the school district. As noted by Weist and Christodulu (2000), mechanisms for enhancing communication and collaboration are greatly needed. The results illustrate that contracted service providers are finding a way to communicate with staff and parents through indirect service hours. Another explanation for the results regarding hours of service data is that contracted service providers are working harder to overcome the barriers that exist between outside agencies and school districts as noted in the research by Kury and Kury (2006). The results indicate that while there are no differences noted in direct service hours among groups, contracted agency providers do provide more indirect service hours than that of school district employed service providers.

**COST FACTORS**

There was no significant difference noted in indirect cost factors between modalities of service. There was, however, a statistically significant difference among districts in direct cost factors. The school districts that employ their own service providers clearly have more direct cost than that of school districts that contract with agencies.

While Bierman (2003) noted that frustration over cost factors has lead to the elimination of some SBMH programs, the results of the current study clearly show that these programs exist while costly. One explanation of the cost involved for agency contracted services may be that providers take on direct costs while serving students. This is possible by having the ability to bill insurance for those services. School employed service providers must have the full monetary support of the school district by providing the funding for every detail of the program. In addition, insurance reimbursement rates for services by school district employed providers are considerably less than agency providers. Analysis of indirect costs for the two groups showed no statistically significant difference therefore indicating that indirect services remain similar in both agency-contracted and district employed service provider programs.

**EDUCATOR SATISFACTION**

The educator satisfaction survey tool had to be analyzed in a number of different methods. Of district employed service programs, 25% of those participating perceived that SBMH services were on site four or more times per week while 55% of agency contracted programs perceived SBMH services on site that much. Of district employed service programs, 91.3% responded positive on the targeted survey questions while 86.7% of agency contracted programs responded positive to the same questions.

While research indicated that educator satisfaction was an important element in an effective SBMH program, educator perception could not be overlooked during the current study (Long et al., 2003; Leger, 2002). It appeared that while many educators may have been eager to express their opinions regarding their SBMH program, a large portion of those educators as indicated in targeted portions of the survey were uneducated as to exactly what services were available on the school site.
There was a statistically significant difference between districts with employed services and districts contracting with agencies illustrating that there was a higher rate of educator satisfaction in the district employed service provider group. One explanation of the test results might be that district employed service providers, as indicated in the research by Han and Weiss (2005), find it easier to establish the boundary-free level of ownership within a school due to their employment status. Contract service providers may have to work harder to be seen as part of the educational setting considering they are employed by an outside agency. In addition, school districts may be more experienced to hire service providers to work in the educational setting by understanding the full realm of student's needs. This confirms the research by Evans, Weist, and Serpell (2007) that indicates the importance of staff selection for SBMH services.

As Arkansas schools continue work to establish funding streams and effective SBMH programs, it is necessary to assess current programs. Research and data may provide the knowledge needed to bring about successful change in school mental health services. Knowledge is power.

Dr. Betsy Kindall has a BSE in secondary education, a MSE in counseling and leadership, and an Ed.D. in educational leadership. Betsy currently works for the Arkansas Department of Education and maintains her passion in school based mental health programs. For more information on Betsy's study or information on her research in SBMH, please contact elizabethkindall@yahoo.com or 870-743-9100 ext238.

References


Slade, E.P. (2002). Effects of school-based mental health programs on mental health service use by adolescents at school and in the community. Mental Health Services Research, 4(3), 151-166.