

THE CHILD AND FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAM

Background

North Carolina is recognized as a national leader in school improvement. High standards, a strong system of accountability, and targeted investments in prekindergarten programs, class size reduction, high school reform, and teacher recruitment and retention initiatives are integral components of the state's effort to raise student achievement and close gaps, improve graduation rates, and better prepare all students for the demands of higher education and skilled work in the 21st Century.

In 2005, Governor Mike Easley made improving coordination between the state's public schools and social service agencies a top priority for supporting student success in the classroom. Health, mental health and other issues can adversely affect children's well-being and their ability to succeed in school. Governor Easley asked the Departments of Health and Human Services and Public Instruction to develop new ways to support the health and human service needs of children and families in order to improve student academic achievement.

As a result, the 2005-2007 biennium budget authorized the creation of the School-based Child and Family Support Team Program. The budget provided support teams comprised of a school nurse and a school social worker in 100 schools across the state. The Program includes the following key elements:

The School-based School Nurse and School Social Worker

The school nurse and social worker will screen and identify children who are potentially at risk of academic failure or out-of-home placement due to physical, social, legal, emotional, or developmental factors. To the extent that identified physical, social, emotional and developmental needs are within the competence of these team leaders to address, they will address them. The nurse/social worker team will work with representatives from the local management entity (LMEs), local department of social services, local health department and other publicly supported children's agencies, as appropriate, to connect student and families to needed care and coordinate, monitor and assure the successful implementation of a unified Child and Family Plan.

Social Service-School Partnerships

The program will focus on developing and supporting an effective local infrastructure of educational, health and human services and juvenile justice resources in the community. The enabling legislation directs local departments of social services and local management entities (mental health agencies) to coordinate care in partnership with the school-based teams.