



Garden Grove Unified School District
Office of Student Services

DRAFT

**Post-Pandemic Mental Health Support in GGUSD:
2021-2022 School Year**

In the 2021-2022 school year, all schools will have access to increased mental health supports. As a community and school district we are acutely aware of the exacerbated mental health challenges that will be present post-pandemic. Over the last several school years, GGUSD has been focused on expanding our mental health supports for students, families and staff members. Wellness continues to be central to the Garden Grove Way as we support social-emotional growth of the whole child.

In addition to our on-going efforts to support mental health, GGUSD is receiving one-time Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) funds for the 2021-2022 school year. A significant portion of these funds will be used to further increase the mental health supports that we offer at our school sites. The ELO funds will allow us to provide new opportunities to engages with students with mental health support before school, after school and on weekends. These additional mental health supports will be provided through a combination of GGUSD mental health staff as well as through partnerships with community agencies. The ELO funds may also be used to create wellness centers at schools, provide social emotional lessons to students, mindfulness courses and wellness trainings for staff.

Overall, as students and staff return to in-person instruction and begin to process the emotional impact of the pandemic, our increased mental health support will be a central focus.

School Social Workers and the ASPIRE System of Care

Currently, GGUSD school social workers (SSW) and mental health interns make up the ASPIRE System of Care (ASPIRE). At their assigned schools, ASPIRE provides direct mental health counseling support, prevention activities (such as mental health presentations), case management services, and crisis support. While the ASPIRE team primarily provides support to general education students, all students, including students receiving special education services, may be referred for care. ASPIRE provides support by feeder pattern so that students may continue to receive consistent care as they move from elementary to intermediate to high school.

As we move into the 2021-2022 school year, GGUSD has hired our sixth certificated SSW. GGUSD has also significantly expanded the number of interns that provide direct mental health support to students to 53. The chart below summaries the expansion of ASPIRE and the possible future expansion as more feeder patterns and assigned schools are added for support:

GGUSD ASPIRE System of Care Expansion										
<small>(ASPIRE SOC = School Social Workers (SSW) + ASPIRE Mental Health Interns)</small>										
School Year	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26
Total Number SSW	0	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of SSW Added/ Year	0	+1	+2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
Number Mental Health Interns	0	6	21	35	53	56	45-60	45-60	45-60	45-60

Mental Health Specialist Position

In order to increase our capacity to support emotional wellness, GGUSD created a new position for the 2021-2022 school year that is tasked with directly supporting mental health. New for next school year is the anticipated addition of 10 Mental Health Specialist positions. The Mental Health Specialist position will be part of the supervisory classified unit and directly support student mental health at school sites. This is an exciting expansion to GGUSD’s mental health supports for students by providing licensed and pre-licensed mental health professionals to engage with our students to promote their mental health and wellness. Much like ASPIRE, at their assigned schools, the Mental Health Specialists will provide direct mental health counseling support, prevention activities, case management services, and crisis support.



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School Psychologists and the Psychologist on Special Assignment

In GGUSD school psychologists provide support for mental health and wellness at their assigned school sites. Over the course of seven years, GGUSD increased the number of full-time school psychologists by 13. Often school psychologists are tasked with providing education around mental health as well as providing direct services to students, families and staff. School psychologists work with all students but have a focus on student's that receive special education services. For the 2021-2022 school year, GGUSD added four additional psychologists assigned to our high schools are intended to support the anticipated increase in mental health needs and referrals for the short-term.

In addition, to assist GGUSD in organizing all of our efforts to best support wellness and mental health, one psychologist on special assignment (PsychOSA) has been appointed. The primary role of the PsychOSA will be to collaborate with the different groups in GGUSD that provide mental health support and unify our approach to assisting the whole child. The PsychOSA will offer guidance for schools to make sure that students are supported when they may be struggling with managing their emotional wellness. The PsychOSA will also provide critical leadership on innovative methods that GGUSD can use to support the wellness of students as they return to school in the Fall.

Mental Health Referrals

When students need mental health support each staff member in GGUSD plays a role. At the secondary level, school counselors are a vital individual that students connect with and counselors often facilitate referrals for additional mental health support. Likewise, school nurses monitor student wellness, which includes mental health, and they frequently make referrals for support. In GGUSD, our system of school based mental health referral is designed to be readily available to all students in need. Each school has access to a mental health provider to refer students directly to. Most often, students are referred to either ASPIRE or an agency that we contract with. The agencies that we contact with provide therapists to deliver counseling hours at their assigned school sites.

To further support our mental health referrals to community agencies, GGUSD has partnered with Care Solace. Care Solace is a company that helps to connect students, families and staff members with mental health services in our community. Care Solace staffs their mental health referral line 24 hours per day, 7 days a week for. The goal of the partnership with Care Solace is to expand mental health support options for students, families and staff members.

Mental Health Trainings

Moving forward, GGUSD plans to continue to provide robust trainings and workshops on mental health. These will include information on how to identify when help may be needed and the options for finding the mental health help an individual may need. The trainings will focus on general steps students, parents and school staff can take to make sure they understand that mental health is an important component to our overall well-being. Starting during Super Week, teachers and district staff will be able to attend several training options that focus on stress reduction, mindfulness, trauma informed classroom practices, mental health awareness, resiliency and suicide prevention. These trainings will be provided by district staff as well as community partners and be offered throughout the school year. Some of our mental health training partners include the Orange County Department of Education, the Orange County Health Care Agency, CHOC Hospital, Western Youth Services, The Priority Center, Didi Hirsch, and many more. Our strong partnership with community agencies allows GGUSD to support or mental health discussions community-wide.