



# American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program

Interim Report - February 2025

**Connecticut State Department of Education**

**Charlene M. Russell-Tucker**

**Commissioner**

## ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program

### **Purpose**

To support the delivery of mental health services for students when school is not in session through Connecticut local and regional school districts, operators of youth camps and other summer programs.

### **Authorization**

[Public Act 22-47](#) established the Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program, enabling the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to issue grants to Connecticut's local and regional school districts, as well as to operators of youth camps and other summer programs. The goal of these grants is to support mental health services for students when school is out of session.

[Public Act 23-167](#) further improved the program by removing the requirement to align the three-year funding with state fiscal year deadlines. This change allows grant recipients to fully utilize and carry over funds for the entire allowable period of performance, in accordance with the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

### **Grant Program Announcement**

May 17, 2023

[Request for Proposals \(RFP\) 836 ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports Grant](#)

### **Grant Award Announcement**

August 15, 2023

[Governor Lamont and Commissioner Russell-Tucker Announce Recipients of Summer Mental Health Grants for Schools and Camps](#)

### **Grant Award Process**

The CSDE allocated over \$4.5 million in ARPA grant funding to 49 school districts and summer camp programs across the state. This funding supports the delivery of mental health services for students during the summer months over a three-year period. Grant awards ranged from \$5,160 to \$50,000 annually in the first two years and were reduced to 70 percent of these amounts in the third year.

The grant application process was open to all schools and summer camp programs in Connecticut. Applicants submitted competitive proposals detailing their needs and implementation plans, which were evaluated using a 54-point scoring rubric. Priority consideration was given to programs serving disproportionately impacted populations, low-income households, and towns with populations of fewer than 13,000 residents.

On June 27, 2024, a second round of funding was awarded to 36 additional school districts and summer camp programs. This allocation, exceeding \$2 million, will support mental health programming for students during the summer months over the next two years.

Individual grant awards for this round range from \$17,000 to \$85,000 per recipient for the two-year period. The outcomes and impacts of this funding will be highlighted in next year's program report.

### Positions Requested in Funded Proposals

Positions – Full time and Part time	Expected Count
Social Workers	26
School Psychologist	7
Trauma Specialist	0
Behavior Technicians	17
Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)	3
School Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors	18
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists	0
Paraprofessionals	5
Clinicians	5
Nurses	4
Other	85
Contracted Services	3
Professional Development	51
<b>Total Positions Requested</b>	<b>170</b>

### Positions Hired to Date (November 2024)

Positions – Full time and Part time	Expected Count
Social Workers	23
School Psychologist	3
Trauma Specialist	-
Behavior Technicians	10
Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)	3
School Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors	31
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists	1
Paraprofessionals	-
Clinicians	-
Nurses	3
Other	20
Contracted Services	9
Professional Development	4
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>96</b>

### Program Expenditures

Program funding operates on a reimbursement basis. School districts and summer camp programs submit fund requests as needed to reimburse the programs for costs incurred to provide mental health support for summer programming. Allowable costs include salary and fringe benefit outlays, contracted services, and supplies. The CSDE has provided \$973,891.63 in reimbursement funding as of November 2024.

ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program				
New Staffing School Year - 2023-2024				
District	Student Enrollment	New Position	Number of Students Served by New Position	Hours of Direct Mental Health Services provided
Andover School District	50	Contracted Services	50	30
BAGS Foundation CT, Inc.	58	Counselors (6)	58	210
Bethany School District	38	Social Worker	38	42
Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley	*	Social Worker	*	*
Boys and Girls Club of Bristol, Inc.	160	Professional Development	160	500
Bridgeport School District	*	Professional Development	*	*
Bridgeport Youth Lacrosse	60	Social Worker	60	*
Bristol School District	*	School Based Child and Family Support Specialist	*	*
Camp Hazen YMCA	*	Nurses (2)	*	*
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford	60	Contracted Services	60	75
Children's Community School	55	Professional Development	55	200
Community First School, Inc.	75	Community Engagement and Support Specialist, Behavior Support Specialist, Enrichment Specialists	75	60
Connecticut Rivers Council, Inc.	*	Summer Camp Counselors	*	*
Danbury School District	*	Social Workers (3)	*	*

Darien School District	40 Staff	Professional Development	-	-
EdAdvance	28	Counselor, Social Worker	27	*
Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse of Southern CT, Inc. (Help for Kids)	10	Counselors and Parent Group Facilitator	*	*
Fairfield School District	189	Contracted - Music/Art/Recreational Therapist	189	39
Granby School District	1,723	Social Worker, Board Certified Behavior Analyst	750	1200
Groton School District	188	Psychologists (2), Social Worker	28	14
Hartford Knights Corp	120	Mentors	120	576
Incarnation Center	*	Coordinators (2), Counselors (3), Nurse	*	*
Killingly School District	271	Behavior Technicians, Teachers (2)	*	*
Leadership, Education, Athletics in Partnership, Inc. (LEAP)	762	Contracted Mental Health Service Providers	*	100
Meriden School District	*	Behavior Technician	*	*
Newtown Community Center	274	Behavior Technician	300	75
North Stonington School District	*	Social Worker, Teacher	*	*
Norwalk School District	1,571	Social Workers (3) and School Counselors (3)	104	90
Norwich School District	*	Behavior Technician	*	*
Orange School District	325	Social Worker	325	24
Plainfield School District	*	Social Worker and Counselor	*	*
Porter's House, Inc.	48	Social Worker, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	50	*
Preston School District	*	Summer Programing Staffing	*	*
Regional School District 01	79	Program Coordinator	79	60

Regional School District 10	89	Social Worker, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Behavior Technician	50	589
Regional School District 13	91	Social Worker	25	48
RF Youth Boxing, Inc.	45	Program Director, Wellness Counselor	30	448
Sacred Heart University	176	Social Emotional Learning Interns	176	470
Scotland School District	97	Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Registered Behavior Technician	15	45
Seymour School District	136	Counselor and Board-Certified Behavior Analyst	30	72
Southington School District	201	Certified School Based Mental Health Staff and Teachers (15)	137	6
Squash Haven, Inc.	103	Social Worker	60	54
Stamford School District	17	Contracted Services	17	10
Sterling School District	317	Contracted Services	317	58
The Bridge Academy School District	50	School Counselor and Social Worker	37	111
The Recreation Camp, Inc.	*	School Psychologist	*	*
Trumbull School District	30	Contracted Services	30	24
Watertown School District	*	Contracted Services	*	*
Windham School District	78	Contracted Services	*	*

\* Data not available at the time of report.

ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program Successful Application 2023-2025					
Lead Applicant	Town / City	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2024	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2025	Award Amount for Fiscal Year 2026 (70%)	Total Grant Award
Andover School District	Andover	\$18,370.00	\$18,370.00	\$12,859.00	\$49,599.00
BAGS Foundation CT, Inc.	Waterbury	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Bethany School District	Bethany	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley	Shelton	\$24,430.00	\$24,430.00	\$17,101.00	\$65,961.00
Boys and Girls Club of Bristol, Inc.	Bristol	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Bridgeport School District	Bridgeport	\$23,889.00	\$23,889.00	\$16,722.30	\$64,500.30
Bridgeport Youth Lacrosse	Bridgeport	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Bristol School District	Bristol	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Camp Hazen YMCA	Chester	\$15,899.15	\$15,899.15	\$11,129.41	\$42,927.71
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford	Hartford	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Children's Community School	Waterbury	\$45,056.74	\$45,056.74	\$31,539.72	\$121,653.20
Community First School, Inc.	Hartford	\$47,900.00	\$47,900.00	\$33,530.00	\$129,330.00
Connecticut Rivers Council, Inc.	East Hartford	\$43,500.00	\$43,500.00	\$30,450.00	\$117,450.00
Danbury School District	Danbury	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Darien School District	Darien	\$34,259.27	\$34,259.27	\$23,981.49	\$92,500.03
EdAdvance	Litchfield	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse of Southern	Stamford	\$49,690.00	\$49,690.00	\$34,783.00	\$134,163.00

CT, Inc. (Help for Kids)					
Fairfield School District	Fairfield	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Granby School District	Granby	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$81,000.00
Groton School District	Mystic	\$17,333.53	\$17,333.53	\$12,133.47	\$46,800.53
Hartford Knights Corp	Hartford	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Incarnation Center	Deep River	\$49,500.00	\$49,500.00	\$34,650.00	\$133,650.00
Killingly School District	Killingly	\$44,592.00	\$44,592.00	\$31,214.40	\$120,398.40
Leadership, Education, Athletics in Partnership, Inc. (LEAP)	New Haven	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Meriden School District	Meriden	\$12,126.00	\$12,126.00	\$8,488.20	\$32,740.20
Newtown Community Center	Newtown	\$34,142.00	\$34,142.00	\$23,899.40	\$92,183.40
North Stonington School District	North Stonington	\$5,160.00	\$5,160.00	\$3,612.00	\$13,932.00
Norwalk School District	Norwalk	\$42,600.00	\$42,600.00	\$29,820.00	\$115,020.00
Norwich School District	Norwich	\$40,123.37	\$40,123.37	\$28,086.36	\$108,333.10
Orange School District	Orange	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Plainfield School District	Plainfield	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$10,500.00	\$40,500.00
Porter's House, Inc.	Waterbury	\$37,860.00	\$37,860.00	\$26,502.00	\$102,222.00
Preston School District	Preston	\$51,800.00	\$51,800.00	\$36,260.00	\$139,860.00
Regional School District 01	Falls Village	\$18,362.50	\$18,362.50	\$12,853.75	\$49,578.75
Regional School District 10	Burlington	\$32,240.00	\$32,240.00	\$22,568.00	\$87,048.00
Regional School District 13	Durham	\$27,780.00	\$27,780.00	\$19,446.00	\$75,006.00
RF Youth Boxing, Inc.	Stamford	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00



Sacred Heart University	Fairfield	\$49,250.00	\$49,250.00	\$34,475.00	\$132,975.00
Scotland School District	Scotland	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$10,500.00	\$40,500.00
Seymour School District	Seymour	\$21,340.00	\$21,340.00	\$14,938.00	\$57,618.00
Southington School District	Southington	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Squash Haven, Inc.	New Haven	\$12,242.00	\$12,242.00	\$8,569.40	\$33,053.40
Stamford School District	Stamford	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Sterling School District	Sterling	\$12,377.23	\$12,377.23	\$8,664.06	\$33,418.52
The Bridge Academy School District	Bridgeport	\$22,241.24	\$22,241.24	\$15,568.87	\$60,051.35
The Recreation Camp, Inc.	Derby	\$21,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$14,700.00	\$56,700.00
Trumbull School District	Trumbull	\$31,000.00	\$31,000.00	\$21,700.00	\$83,700.00
Watertown School District	Watertown	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$135,000.00
Windham School District	Willimantic	\$25,943.00	\$25,943.00	\$18,160.10	\$70,046.10

**Grant Impact Summary:**

The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program has significantly transformed summer programs and camps across Connecticut by improving access to mental health services, promoting social-emotional learning, and strengthening students' resilience during the summer months. Key highlights include:

**1. Enhanced Access to Services:**

- Provided students with on-site access to mental health professionals, including social workers, board-certified behavior analysts, counselors, and psychologists, during summer camps and programs.
- Enabled specialized programming such as executive functioning and coping skills groups, art and wellness workshops, and trauma-informed training for mental health professionals.

**2. Positive Student Outcomes:**

- Significant progress in treatment plan goals.
- Improved emotional regulation, self-advocacy, and problem-solving skills.
- Opportunities for students with disabilities and special needs to receive targeted support, reducing the need for out-of-district placements.

**3. Social and Academic Development:**

- Programs encouraged social skill development, independence, and resilience through experiential learning (e.g., outdoor activities, cooperative games, and community outings).
- Multilingual Learner (MLL) students expanded social vocabulary, while students from underserved areas engaged in enriching activities like museum visits and meal planning.

**4. Staff Training and Support:**

- Extensive professional development for mental health staff in trauma-informed care and evidence-based strategies, equipping them to better support students.
- Teachers reported reduced burnout and improved classroom management skills.

**5. Community and Emotional Well-Being:**

- Initiatives such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills training, music and art therapy, and peer mentoring helped students reduce stress and build emotional resilience.

- Programs provided safe spaces for students to process emotions, build confidence, and practice social skills.

#### **6. Parental and Teacher Insights:**

- Feedback from surveys highlighted concerns such as social media use and behavioral enforcement, shaping future programming and support strategies.
- The grant supported smoother transitions back to school in the fall and increased academic engagement.

This funding has empowered schools and summer camp programs to address the youth mental health crisis by integrating innovative programs that prioritize mental well-being, build supportive communities, and set students up for long-term success.

#### **District Reports:**

**Andover School District:** *The support provided through Andover, Hebron, Marlborough (AHM) Mental Health Services was not additional staffing but specialized professional services. This was invaluable, as AHM often has a waitlist, leaving many children without access to services during the summer. The grant expanded access to these vital mental health services throughout the summer and made them available to children attending summer camp on our campus.*

**BAGS Foundation CT, Inc.:** *With the grant, we hired six new therapists to provide services to students during the summer. As a result, 84% of students (49 in total) achieved 100% of their treatment plan goals, 14% achieved 88% of their goals, and only one student did not meet their treatment goals.*

**Bethany School District:** *This summer, we will utilize the grant funding to support our most vulnerable students. The program will enable us to hire a social worker to work closely with students who have social-emotional needs, with a particular focus on two groups: rising 6th graders with increased needs and rising 4th graders who were significantly impacted by COVID-19. The social worker will provide critical support to both students and their families, helping to address their mental health needs and strengthen family engagement.*

*Having mental health staff available during the summer will benefit not only the participating students but also the broader community. For students from New Haven, who may lack a safe place to play, this program offers opportunities to engage in community activities and explore experiences they might not otherwise have access to.*

*Additionally, Multilingual Learners (MLL) will have the chance to expand their social vocabulary, while students with social-emotional challenges will practice their skills in diverse settings. Students with special needs will receive explicit instruction and opportunities to generalize their skills, promoting growth in both academic and social-emotional areas. This comprehensive approach ensures that all students have the tools and support they need to thrive.*

**Boys and Girls Club of Bristol, Inc.:** *While we did not use the grant to hire new staff, we invested in professional development and mental health resources to better equip our team to address the evolving challenges in youth mental health. The grant funded expert trainers, including social workers and other mental health professionals, who provided staff with valuable training in areas such as de-escalation strategies, trauma-informed approaches, creating inclusive environments, and understanding the critical role of play in child development and mental health.*

*The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has been a transformative resource for our organization. Over three summers, it has enabled us to implement targeted programming designed to tackle the pressing issue of youth mental health. These initiatives focus on fostering resilience, building robust support networks, and teaching practical mental health strategies. By empowering youth to navigate challenges, prioritize self-care, and develop sustainable mental health practices, we are helping to create a brighter, healthier future for all participants.*

**Bridgeport School District:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has allowed Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) to offer trauma-informed student mental health training to BPS mental health professionals during the summer of 2024. As part of the professional development, school mental health professionals received in-depth training on: (1) understanding trauma and how it manifests, (2) understanding the nature, causes, and effects of trauma, (3) understanding trauma's impact on cognitive, emotional, and social functioning among students, (4) increased information on trauma-informed principles and practices that foster safe, supportive, and empowering school environments, and (5) develop a toolkit of evidenced-based strategies and interventions to address trauma-related issues, support resilience, and promote healing and growth. It is critical that BPS' school mental health professionals receive this training and support on trauma to best support and understand the needs of all students.*

**Bridgeport Youth Lacrosse:** *The program fostered open conversations about the stigma surrounding mental health in the Bridgeport community, creating a safe and supportive environment for participants. Staff built personal connections with participants, helping them process and address the trauma they have experienced within the community. Support extended beyond regular program hours, ensuring participants had access to assistance whenever needed.*

*Through this program, students felt comfortable sharing their feelings and discussing challenges they face at home and in school. They were equipped with tools to self-regulate, empowering them to manage their emotions and navigate difficult situations more effectively.*

**Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has provided students with critical access to clinical services and social-emotional learning (SEL) opportunities. These resources have empowered students to develop essential skills in emotional regulation, effective communication, and resilience. By addressing both immediate*

*mental health needs and fostering long-term growth, the program has created a supportive environment where students can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.*

**Children's Community School:** *Having the right staff in place to ensure students feel safe, valued, and actively engaged is essential to our mission. With this support, students were better prepared to learn and succeed in the following school year. Additionally, the program helped students rebuild critical peer connection skills that were significantly impacted by the pandemic.*

**Community First School, Inc.:** *This past summer, the Build a Better Community Summer Camp served a record number of children, offering a comprehensive program of academic support, enrichment activities, and daily mental health services over five weeks. With a team of 20 staff members, including additional counselors from Our Piece of the Pie and Blue Hills Civic Association, the camp maintained an impressive student-to-teacher ratio of less than 5:1.*

*The addition of five dedicated mental health professionals, along with enrichment activities incorporating therapeutic elements, provided students and their families with a well-rounded, supportive camp experience. This level of service is rarely available in the Promise Zone neighborhoods we primarily serve.*

*Students universally reported that the camp helped them stay on track academically, while also providing a safe and welcoming space to express themselves and enjoy their summer.*

**Connecticut Rivers Council, Inc.:** *The impact of this grant has been transformative, enabling us to significantly enhance the support we provide to our campers and staff. Through the funding, we were able to add additional peer support for campers, creating a more inclusive and understanding environment that fosters connection and resilience. The grant also allowed us to bring on counselors and nurses, who have been instrumental in addressing both health and mental health needs.*

**Darien School District:** *Last year the program was small due to the funds being allocated later in the summer. The school climate survey was administered and has given the district further insight into the mental health needs of our students. Specifically, we have identified parents' concerns over social media use, and teachers' concerns with enforcement of rules. This survey has allowed us to compare the experiences of students by grade, school, socio-economic status, special education status, etc. It has allowed the same across families and staff. The teachers who participated in the program last year reported feeling slightly less burnt out and identified strategies to support students. This summer the training is more robust as we have initiated an administrator training and have 30 teachers registered for an additional training. Based on data collected, 100% of attendees were able to identify at least two strategies they can use to support student mental health. We anticipate that the larger group being trained in August will have a similar response to the training.*

**EdAdvance:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant enabled us to hire eleven school social workers and counselors, significantly expanding access to mental health resources for our*

*students. These professionals provide vital support, addressing students' emotional needs and fostering overall well-being. By strengthening our capacity to offer targeted mental health services, we anticipate lasting positive impacts on the mental health, resilience, and academic success of the students we serve.*

**Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse of Southern CT, Inc. (Help for Kids):**

*Introducing a dedicated counselor for our youth is an important new initiative made possible by the grant. While funding was not available for the summer of 2023, significant progress has been made since the funding announcement, including program training, outreach, and youth enrollment, all of which were completed by June 30, 2024. As the program is still in its early stages, the full impact on youth outcomes has yet to be measured, but we anticipate meaningful results in the months ahead.*

**Fairfield School District:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant had a profound impact on students by integrating music and art into a comprehensive mental health program. Through creative expression, students were able to explore their emotions, reduce stress, and build resilience. The program provided a safe and supportive environment where students could connect with peers and mentors, leading to improved emotional well-being and a greater sense of community. The grant not only enhanced the students' mental health but also empowered them with tools for self-expression and coping that will benefit them long-term.*

**Granby School District:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has had a significant positive impact on students districtwide, particularly in improving social-emotional functioning. It has also helped address school refusal behaviors, allowing students to attend school more consistently. As a result, students with non-compliance or aggressive behaviors have been able to overcome barriers and engage more fully in the classroom, leading to better attendance and active participation in their education.*

**Groton School District:** *The mental health workers focused on supporting students' Individualized education plan (IEP) goals related to self-regulation, including identifying triggers and using coping strategies. They also worked on enhancing skills in problem-solving, social interaction, conflict resolution, stress management, and self-advocacy, helping students develop essential skills for success both in and outside the classroom.*

**Hartford Knights Corp:** *Without additional funding for extra staffing, including mentors, a program director, and mental health staff, we would not have been able to serve 120 students. The funding allowed us to provide a safe and supportive environment, keeping students off the streets and offering them a much-needed safe haven.*

**Killingly School District:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has enabled us to continue adding staff to meet the growing social and emotional needs of our students, both directly and indirectly. With this funding, we have been able to expand our support team, ensuring that students receive the attention and care they need to thrive. We are deeply*



*appreciative of this support, which plays a crucial role in fostering a positive and nurturing environment for our students.*

**Leadership, Education, Athletics in Partnership, Inc. (LEAP):** *Thanks to the support of this grant, five highly skilled Mental Health Support Providers have been hired, bringing extensive experience in addressing a range of youth mental health challenges. Within the first week of programming, these professionals have already made a significant impact by assisting counselors and children through direct interventions and strategic planning for youth with mental health diagnoses. They have initiated meaningful conversations around emotional regulation and provided safe spaces for children to process both challenging and positive emotions.*

*Looking ahead, the providers will continue to support their assigned sites, including facilitating small-group sessions focused on social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. This approach is helping children feel supported, understood, and better equipped to manage their emotions effectively.*

**Newtown Community Center:** *This grant has had a transformative impact on our day camp by providing crucial mental health resources, including behavioral interventionists and dedicated support for both campers and counselors. These professionals play a key role in addressing mental health and behavioral needs, fostering a supportive and enriching camp environment.*

*As a result, we have seen an improvement in staff morale due to increased training and resources, while parents have noticed positive changes in their children's behavior. With the addition of trained staff, we've been able to implement effective behavior plans that directly assist counselors in managing and supporting campers.*

*This initiative has enhanced emotional well-being, improved coping skills, and promoted positive behaviors, creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive space for all participants.*

**Norwalk School District:** *This grant has significantly enhanced the services we offer to students during the Summer Academy, addressing a critical gap caused by budgetary constraints. Previously, we struggled to provide consistent mental health support, but this funding allowed us to have a full-time counselor and social worker on-site at each Summer Academy location.*

*The impact has been remarkable. Students have had continuous access to mental health professionals throughout the program, fostering emotional well-being and academic success. As one student poignantly shared, "If I didn't have [name of social worker] available to me during summer school, I would not have graduated."*

*This funding has truly transformed our ability to support students, ensuring they receive the care and guidance needed to thrive both emotionally and academically.*

**Orange School District:** *This grant had a positive impact on our summer learning program, enabling us to provide a comprehensive range of mental health and social-emotional learning (SEL) resources for students and families alike. With this funding, we have been able to enhance staff capabilities, implement targeted student programming, and offer valuable support to parents and caregivers, all while fostering a supportive and engaging environment for learning.*

*Staff members are undergoing intensive social thinking training, led by experts from Michelle Garcia Winner's team, to integrate evidence-based practices into real-life learning scenarios. They have also participated in Mental Health First Aid training provided by Bridges, ensuring they are well-prepared to address the diverse mental health needs of our students. These efforts have significantly enhanced the ability of our staff to support students' social and emotional growth.*

*Our summer sessions, serving 170–200 students weekly, are centered on creating enriching health and wellness experiences that naturally cultivate social thinking and emotional regulation skills. Activities such as yoga, play, physical education, free Lego building, and STEM sessions through Camp Invention offer students authentic opportunities to practice recognizing, understanding, and regulating emotions. For students in Grades 4–6, specialized groups focus on developing executive functioning skills like planning, organization, and time management, fostering greater independence. Additionally, coping skills groups provide strategies for emotional intelligence, stress management, and resilience, empowering students to navigate challenges with confidence.*

*Parents and caregivers are also benefiting from evidence-based workshops, including sessions on the Nurtured Heart approach and strategies to manage childhood anxiety. These workshops equip families with practical tools to support their children's mental health and social-emotional growth at home.*

*To further enrich the program, we have integrated the RULER framework from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, which builds emotional intelligence and supports positive school climates. SEL curricula such as Second Step, Zones of Regulation, Super Flex, and Social Detective are seamlessly incorporated into programming, along with curated read-aloud sessions featuring books designed to promote positive social-emotional development.*

*This multifaceted approach is creating a vibrant and nurturing summer learning environment where students can develop vital skills such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and resilience. Parents and caregivers are becoming more empowered, while students are gaining the tools they need to thrive both academically and emotionally. This program is ensuring that its impact will extend far beyond the summer, strengthening the entire school community.*

**Porter's House, Inc.:** *Thanks to this grant, we were able to add two licensed clinicians to our team, significantly enhancing the services we provide to youth at our summer camp. These clinicians lead daily social-emotional learning (SEL) groups and offer outpatient therapy sessions to participants who choose to enroll.*

*Through these initiatives, we are equipping our youth with healthy coping skills to manage feelings of being overwhelmed. The clinicians create safe, supportive spaces where young people can openly ask questions, express themselves, and actively practice the strategies they*



*learn in the SEL groups. This approach fosters emotional growth and resilience, providing long-lasting benefits for the children we serve.*

**Regional School District 01:** *This summer, we hired three adult staff members to lead our program, dedicating time to planning and two full weeks of daily student engagement. Additionally, we employed five high school students as junior counselors and brought on 11 adults to facilitate specialized activities throughout the two-week program.*

*During the mornings, students spent their time outdoors participating in activities such as canoeing, paddleboarding, hiking, stream walking, and tackling a ropes course. Afternoons were filled with creative and hands-on pursuits, including art projects, cooperative backyard games, ice cream and berry buckle making, floral arranging, and learning about small animals.*

*Our region spans six K-8 schools over 247 square miles, making it rare for students to connect with peers from other towns before entering high school. This program provided a priceless opportunity for students to forge friendships across the region. Multilingual Learner (MLL) students also contributed by teaching their peers Spanish vocabulary related to outdoor activities.*

*The program emphasized cooperative learning, risk-taking, and hands-on exploration. Students ran, played, solved problems, and conducted science experiments—completely free of cell phones for two weeks. This enriching experience not only fostered connections and social-emotional growth but also inspired a sense of adventure and curiosity among all participants.*

**Regional School District 10:** *The additional staffing funded by this grant enabled us to expand our programming to include high school students, supporting 13 participants with the assistance of our school social worker and behavioral technicians. We also sustained programming led by our board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) throughout the Extended School Year (ESY) program, allowing us to provide individualized, intensive services to 26 students in our specialized programs.*

*Students had valuable opportunities to learn and practice social skills in real-world settings. Our elementary students enjoyed camp experiences, many for the first time, through activities with Harwinton Parks and Recreation. High school students engaged in community-based activities such as field trips, collaborative visits with other ESY programs, and outings to museums, restaurants, and movies. They also planned meals, picnics, and other leisure activities, which promoted practical life skills and social independence.*

*This grant has significantly enhanced social skills development across age groups, supported early learning for our youngest students, and provided targeted assistance to students with the highest behavioral needs. By offering these robust programs locally, we reduced out-of-district ESY placements for 13 high school students. Overall, this initiative has fostered academic and social independence in our students, enriching their experiences and preparing them for success.*

**Regional School District 13:** *This grant enabled us to provide critical mental health services by employing a counselor during the summer of 2023 to support students in need of ongoing mental health care. Since the pandemic, the demand for school counseling has surged dramatically and continues to be a fundamental factor in ensuring students feel safe and ready to learn at all grade levels.*

*In many of our communities, access to mental health services remains limited. This grant addressed this gap by offering much-needed summer counseling, allowing students to receive intervention services and develop essential coping skills. These supports have been invaluable in fostering emotional resilience and creating a stronger foundation for academic and personal success.*

**RF Youth Boxing, Inc.:** *The funding provided by the ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has allowed RF Youth Boxing to significantly expand its services, offering mental health, fitness, and wellness support that we otherwise would not have been able to provide. With this funding, we introduced the "Creating Through Crisis" program, which was designed to address the growing youth mental health crisis by combining the arts with physical activity and healthy coping strategies. The program serves young people aged 8 to 18 in the Revolution Fitness Youth Program, helping them build resilience and navigate life's challenges in a supportive, creative environment.*

*"Creating Through Crisis" promotes positive mental health and well-being, teaching youth to express their emotions through the arts while learning healthy coping strategies. By integrating therapeutic art, mindfulness practices like yoga, journaling, public art projects, dance, and other creative outlets, participants are empowered to understand and improve their mental health. The program also works to reduce stigma around mental health issues, providing a safe space for youth to open up and learn practical skills for managing their emotions.*

*In Stamford, there has been a noticeable need for additional mental health support, especially among young people of color and those from low-income households. Data from local schools highlights an alarming number of suicide ideations and attempts, particularly among high school students and those in the LGBTQ+ community. This makes our program even more critical, as it helps address these issues by offering emotional and mental health support, while fostering resilience and self-care skills.*

*With the support of the ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant, we have been able to offer over 400 hours of programming, including arts and wellness workshops, wellness counseling, and peer and mentor support groups. These initiatives have made a significant positive impact on our students' mental health and well-being. Additionally, we hired more staff to ensure that we could meet the needs of the students and provide them with the support required for personal growth and healing. The success of the program will continue to be assessed through the Devereau Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) mini assessment and feedback from our*

*mental health professionals, ensuring we are meeting our goal of supporting youth mental health in meaningful ways.*

**Sacred Heart University:** *The ARPA Summer Mental Health Supports grant has had a profound impact on Horizons Sacred Heart University (HSHU) by enabling us to add two Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Facilitators to our team. These facilitators, who are experts in SEL practices, have worked closely with our staff to ensure that the SEL curriculum developed by the Harvard EASEL Lab is delivered with precision and effectiveness. Their support has significantly improved the quality and fidelity of our SEL instruction, leading to measurable growth in students' SEL skills, as demonstrated by data from the Insights platform.*

*In addition to enhancing our instructional delivery, the facilitators have played a key role in creating targeted intervention plans to help students develop a stronger sense of belonging and connectedness. These interventions have allowed students to build meaningful relationships and feel more supported within the HSHU community, improving their overall well-being and engagement in the program.*

*This specialized support has elevated the quality of our SEL programming, ensuring that it meets the diverse needs of our students. It has also furthered HSHU's mission of providing a nurturing and transformative educational experience.*

*The grant has also enabled us to work with trauma-informed practice consultant Dr. Craig Haen and his colleague Kat Lee, MSW. They have conducted clinical supervision meetings with our staff, providing them with the skills and strategies needed to implement trauma-informed practices. This ongoing professional development has strengthened our staff's ability to create a safe, nurturing environment for students, promoting their emotional and academic growth.*

*Thanks to this funding, we have been able to offer targeted mental health and SEL interventions that foster emotional resilience and a sense of belonging. By addressing both individual and collective trauma, we have seen improvements in student engagement, emotional regulation, and academic performance, underscoring the critical role of this grant in supporting our mission.*

**Scotland School District:** *Before receiving this grant, we did not have the means to offer any summer mental health supports. This funding was a game changer, as it allowed us to provide much-needed services for the first time. The mental health support we were able to offer made a significant difference for our students. Families expressed their gratitude, and the transition back to school in the fall was much smoother as a result of the services we provided over the summer. This grant truly had an invaluable impact.*

**Seymour School District:** *This grant allowed us to provide direct counseling supports to students attending this year's Extended School Year (ESY) program. We were able to offer both small-group and individual counseling, addressing the unique needs of our students. In addition, we funded board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) consultation services for the ESY program, providing critical support for students with disabilities during the summer months. These*

*services were vital in ensuring students received the support they needed throughout the summer.*

**Southington School District:** *Through this grant, we were able to expand mental health services within our Extended School Year (ESY) program by utilizing existing staff. This increased access to mental health support for students during the summer months, including the involvement of board-certified behavior analysts (BCBAs), social workers, and school psychologists. The ability to provide these supports was essential for our students' well-being and success, ensuring they were better prepared for the school year ahead.*

**Squash Haven, Inc.:** *This summer will be our first time offering small group and individual mental health support, thanks to the funding from this grant. We have seen a clear need for such services in our middle school program, and we are excited to augment our support and programming to address these mental health needs. This funding allows us to provide the kind of care and attention that will positively impact our students' emotional well-being and development.*

**Stamford School District:** *Through this grant, we were able to offer therapy sessions to students who otherwise might not have received the intensive skill-building support they needed. Over the course of eight sessions, students learned valuable dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) concepts such as journaling, mindfulness, distress tolerance skills, and how to use their "wise mind." These skills will help them better regulate their emotions both at home and at school. For many students, this was their first experience with therapy, and the positive connection they made to the process has encouraged them to continue therapy after the summer program ended.*

**Sterling School District:** *The goal of this project was to ensure every child had the opportunity to engage in learning experiences that boosted their self-esteem and allowed them to express themselves in positive and creative ways. Many of our students face challenges that can manifest as disruptive behaviors, but this program helped address those underlying issues. By providing outlets for expression, we were able to support students in overcoming challenges and engaging more positively in the classroom.*

**The Bridge Academy School District:** *With the support of this grant, we were able to continue providing counseling services through the summer months, offering critical mental health support to our summer school students. This helped create a more positive and supportive summer school environment, resulting in more students successfully passing their courses. The ability to provide immediate mental health services made a noticeable difference in the overall atmosphere of our summer program.*

**Trumbull School District:** *The Effective School Solutions (ESS) staff used this grant to provide direct clinical support to students while also offering parent training and consultation for school staff. This approach ensured that students received comprehensive support to help them*

*transition successfully to their next school level. We believe this program will be instrumental in helping our students navigate their educational journey with the support they need for a successful transition.*

**Watertown School District:** *During the summer, our students are invited to attend Summer School. However, many students who face significant challenges and lack a strong support system at home often do not attend, even when it is necessary for their progress. Extended periods during the summer without access to mental health support can be incredibly difficult for these students.*

*Thanks to the ARPA Summer Mental Health Support Grant, we partnered with Effective School Solutions to address this critical need. Through this partnership, students and families received wraparound services, clinical therapy sessions, and ongoing counseling throughout the summer months. This support has been pivotal in providing stability, fostering emotional well-being, and ensuring continuous care for our students during a time when they need it most.*