

## McAllen Independent School District

### **District Overview**

McAllen Independent School District (ISD) is located in the Rio Grande Valley at the southern tip of Texas ten miles from the Mexico border in Hidalgo County. McAllen ISD is comprised of 19 elementary, 6 middle, and 4 high schools, along with a disciplinary alternative education program campus. In 2013 McAllen ISD, through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) federal grant, surveyed students ( $n=9300$ ) from grade levels 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> on the question, “During the past 12 months, have you felt depressed, sad or hopeless for two consecutive weeks?” The total amount of students that identified “yes” was 2124 out of 9300 surveyed, approximately 22.8%. The data is similar to the results of the Regional Health Partnership 5 (RHP5) Community Needs Assessment (CNA) (2018) which found that 25% of the estimated 1.2 million people aged six or older, with 25,000 children, in the Rio Grande Valley had some level of mental health need. The RHP 5 CNA (2018) identified the majority of the individuals living 200% below the federal poverty level and self-injury/harming behaviors, substance abuse, and depression being the most prevalent amongst children and youth.

### **Program Design**

McAllen ISD was the recipient of the SS/HS grant from 2008-2013 that helped the district address access to mental health, substance abuse, and violence prevention services. The sustainable goal was to increase access to mental health services district-wide, so the Family Treatment Program (FTP) was the result of those efforts. The FTP has flourished over the last 6 years by strengthening mental health partnerships and facilitating school-based mental health services by establishing strong memorandum/interlocal agreements. McAllen ISD has been able to increase campus-

based intensive psychiatric case management and therapeutic services utilizing the resources of our various mental health partners at no cost to the district. The FTP has created community partnerships with the local mental health authority (Tropical Texas Behavioral Health), substance abuse treatment facilities, such as Mesquite Treatment Center and Palmer Drug Abuse Program, The Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas, as well as private behavioral hospitals (Doctors Hospital at Renaissance-Behavioral & South Texas Health Systems-Behavioral) that provide outpatient services within the district. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School Psychology Program graduate students also conduct their practicum within the district. The key component in McAllen ISD's school-based mental health services is the utilization of school district Prevention Intervention Specialists which allows for partnering mental health agencies to have a liaison to ensure mental health services can be rendered without barriers. The infrastructure of the FTP, and the Prevention Intervention Specialists, has helped in increasing access to mental health services at McAllen ISD.