

ELEMENTARY CORRESPONDENT

EVALUATION REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF THE MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICES TEAM MODEL (MOST) IN AUBURN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

*A GRANT TO AUBURN ENLARGED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
U.S. Department of Education
Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program*

Volume II, Number 1 (August 2007)

FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF PARENTS & CAREGIVERS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

In October 2005, the Auburn Enlarged City School District (AECSD) received a 3-year grant to implement a school-based mental health intervention from the U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. The funded project, known as **Elementary MOST** (Mobile Outreach Services Team) is being implemented by AECSD's elementary schools in collaboration with the Partnership for Results.

In the first edition of the *Elementary Correspondent* (December 2006), the local evaluator, Youth Policy Institute (YPI), reported that the initiative was achieving impressive results during its first year of operation. Appropriately qualified staff were employed and thoroughly trained in a timely fashion on the model's procedures, assessment instruments, and database. Project administrators have put in place the salient elements of the MOST model. During the first year of operations, the project served a client population with complex

service needs that were likely to benefit from the intervention. Program outcomes, moreover, were very positive, and there was little doubt that Elementary MOST was, to a substantial degree, promoting the positive social, emotional, and educational development of participating students. The subsequent report of the *Elementary Correspondent* will examine the effectiveness of the program during its first two years of operations.

Another edition of the *Elementary Correspondent* explored the important issue of fidelity to established practices by evaluating the extent to which Elementary MOST clinicians were adhering to the salient elements of Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT), an evidence-based therapeutic intervention used with the project's younger clients. Elementary MOST clinicians, it was found, were implementing the intervention with a consistently high degree of adherence to the therapeutic model. This success in rolling out a complex model, it was

concluded, was the result of an effective preparatory training, routine technical assistance in critical elements of a highly structured MOST model, and ongoing clinical supervision and training. A forthcoming *Elementary Correspondent* evaluation report will examine adherence to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), the therapeutic intervention frequently used with older elementary school students.

This edition of the *Elementary Correspondent* will assess the role played by parents and caregivers in MOST services and their satisfaction with the program. As the intervention is designed, parents and caregivers have a formative influence on MOST outcomes. The success of the intervention depends to a great extent on their understanding of program components from the outset, their involvement in and approval of its diagnostic and service coordination activities, and their efforts to reinforce the therapeutic strategies.

The involvement of parents and caregivers occurs throughout the intervention. The MOST model employs a comprehensive approach to social, emotional, and behavioral issues, addressing adverse circumstances and reinforcing existing strengths at the household and client level. When the Wellbeing Assessment Instrument (WellBAT) is administered, both clients and their family members are involved in the diagnostic interviews and the collection of collateral data. On the basis of those multi-disciplinary, functional assessments, MOST clinicians develop integrated services plans to address unmet service needs and to bolster identified resiliencies of both the student participants and household members. Moreover, all clinicians on the MOST team employ CCPT and CBT as the principal treatment modalities. These are therapeutic interventions which benefit from parent/caregiver understanding of the underpinnings of the clinical strategy and from reinforcement by parents and caregivers

of strategies identified by the clinicians as central to the intervention.

SURVEY RESULTS

THE SURVEY POPULATION

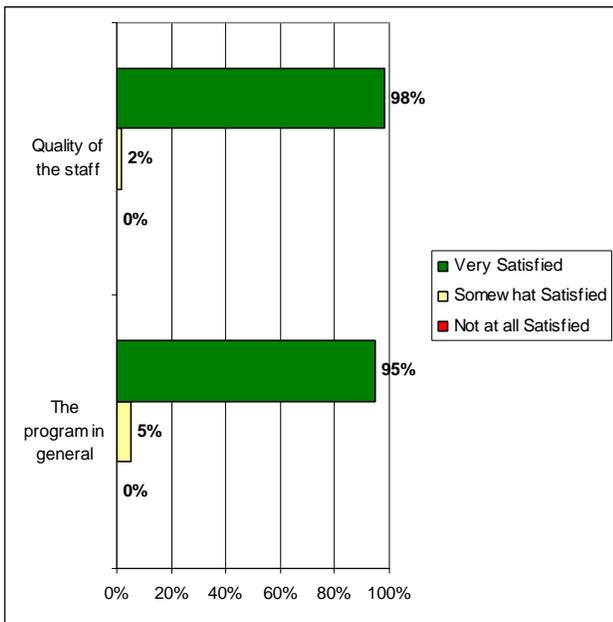
Beginning in December of 2006, YPI began distributing surveys to parents and caregivers as their children completed MOST services and had their cases closed. Sixty surveys were returned for analysis through July of 2007, a return rate of approximately 50% of the cases closed and completed during this time period. This is an exceptionally high return rate,¹ the result of personal requests to participate made by MOST clinicians once the case was closed. The gender distribution of the participating youth whose parents/caregivers were surveyed, 33% female and 67% male, is roughly the same as those who completed the program services. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents were white, a percentage comparable to that of the entire survey group. Ninety-two percent of the 60 persons who completed surveys were biological parents and 7% were grand parents. The great majority of respondents (87%) were women. Parents and caregivers of children attending all five Auburn elementary schools returned surveys. Herman Avenue Elementary School surveys represented 37% of the total; the other four schools ranged from 15% to 18% of the total.

Overall Satisfaction

As displayed in **Figure 1** below, parents and caregivers expressed exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with the MOST program and with its staff. More than nine of every ten respondents were “very satisfied” and with the quality of the MOST staff. Not one parent or caregiver expressed dissatisfaction.

¹ Parent satisfaction return rates rarely exceed 10% for similar projects.

Figure 1
General Satisfaction of Parents and Caregivers with the Program and Staff



PARENT AND CAREGIVER UNDERSTANDING OF MOST AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE INTERVENTION

Parent and caregiver involvement in MOST is a critical component of its ultimate success. All respondent parents and caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that the program was thoroughly explained to them at the outset, and that their questions or concerns with the program were sufficiently addressed. Ninety-seven percent of parents/caregivers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were encouraged by the MOST clinicians to be involved in the intervention (Figure 2 below).

The MOST model and its constituent therapeutic modalities require frequent and substantive involvement of the parents and caregivers. As indicated in Figures 3 through 6, such involvement occurred on a frequent basis. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents reviewed the progress their children were making in the program with the therapist on a monthly basis, and an additional 31% did so weekly or daily, as indicated in Figure 3 below. Few parents

or caregivers were disinclined to discuss the progress of their children with the MOST clinicians. Ten percent reported reviewed the progress of the intervention with the clinician several times a year.

Figure 2
Level of Parent/Caregiver Agreement that MOST Clinicians Explained the Program and Encouraged their Involvement

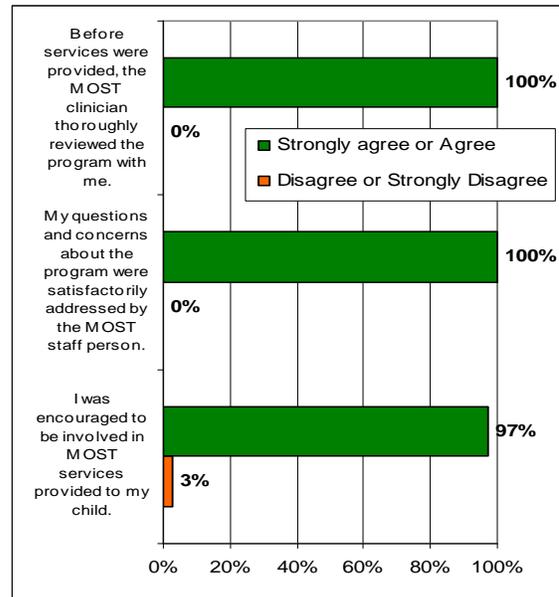
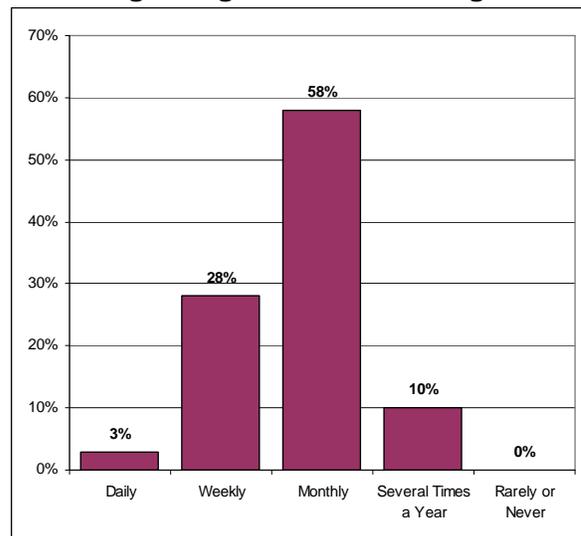
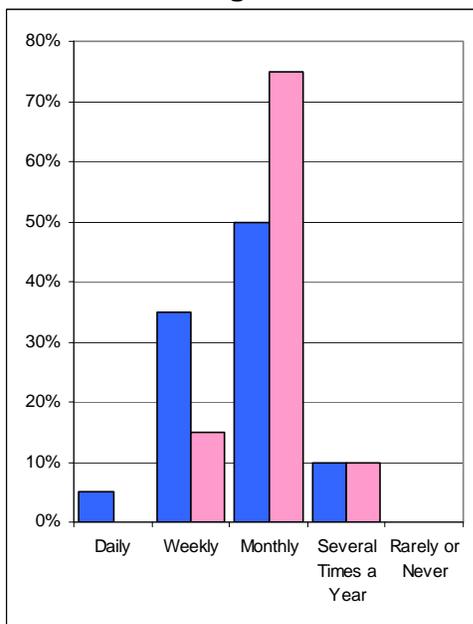


Figure 3
Frequency with which Parents and Caregivers Spoke to the Therapists Regarding their Child's Progress



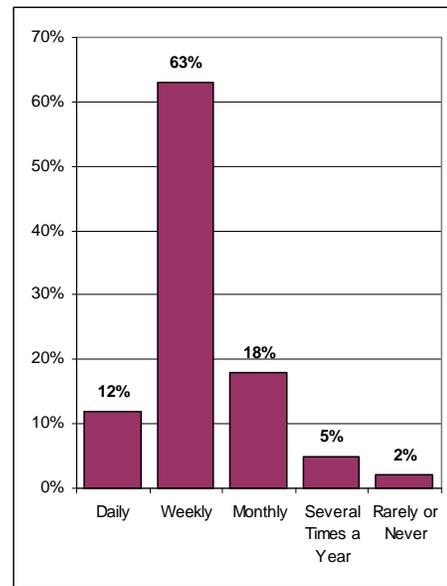
There is a statistically significant difference in the inclination of parents and caregivers to speak with the MOST clinician regarding the progress of their children by the gender of the child. As indicated in **Figure 4**, parents and caregivers of boys were more likely to speak to clinicians than those of girls ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 4
The Effect of the Child's Gender on the Inclination of Parents/Caregivers to Speak with MOST Clinician about a Child's Progress



A large majority of parents/caregivers, 75%, indicated that they spoke to their children at least weekly about the progress they were making in the intervention (**Figure 5**). An additional 18% spoke about the intervention with their children at least monthly.

Figure 5
Frequency with which Parents/Caregivers Spoke to their Children Regarding their Child's Progress



Beyond monitoring the impact of MOST services on their children, parent/caregiver respondents indicated that they supported the intervention in other critical ways. Four in ten participated in therapy sessions with their children, with nearly one-quarter participating in these sessions on a monthly basis. As indicated in **Figure 6** below, more than 90% of all parents and caregivers surveyed used supportive strategies suggested by the therapist, with 72% doing so on a daily or weekly basis. When suggested by MOST clinicians, parents and caregivers also sought additional services for their children and for themselves. One-half did so several times a year or monthly; one in five followed up on suggested services at least weekly (**Figure 7** below).

Figure 6
Frequency with which Parents/Caregivers Used Strategies Suggested by Clinicians

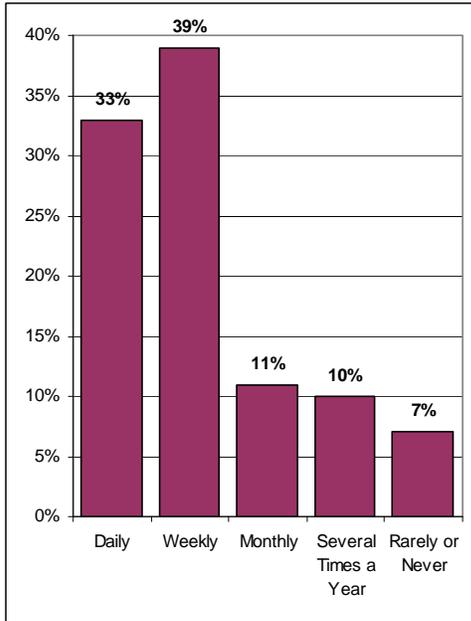
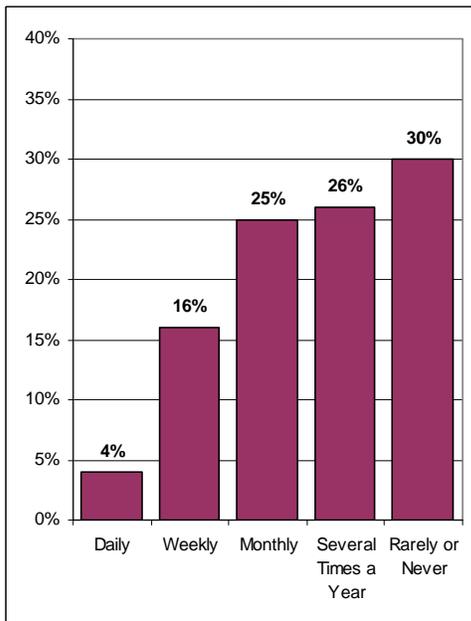


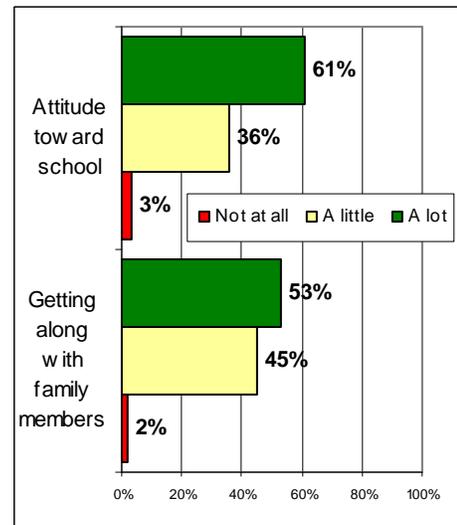
Figure 7
Frequency with which Parents/Caregivers Sought Additional Services for their Children or Themselves base on the Clinicians' Suggestions



PARENT AND CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

A large majority (88%) of parent and caregiver respondents were “very satisfied” with the progress shown by their children as a result of the MOST intervention; 12% were “somewhat satisfied” and none were dissatisfied. It is evident that parents and caregivers perceived the program to have a wide range of other positive effects. Nearly all parents and caregivers saw improved attitudes toward school, with 61% observing significant improvements and another 36% perceiving some improvement. Similarly, 98% saw improvements in the capacity to interact positively with other family interactions, with over one-half noting significant positive change (Figure 8).

Figure 8
Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of the Extent to which MOST had a Positive Impact on Attitudes toward School and Family Interactions

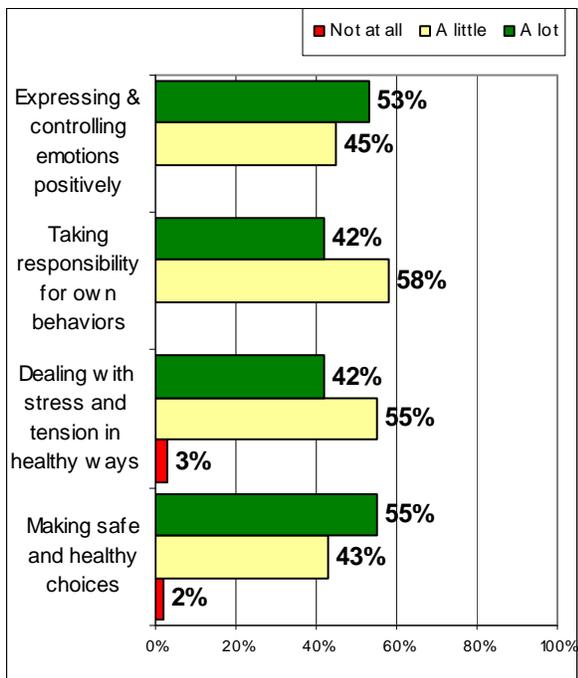


All parent/caregiver respondents reported improvements in self-esteem (70% reporting significant improvement; 30% reporting some improvement) and in self-confidence (63% and 37% respectively). Similarly, overwhelming majority of survey respondents

reported positive or very positive improvements in the social and emotional well-being of their children, including: their capacity to express and control emotions in a positive way; and ability take responsibility for their own behaviors; their capacity to deal with stress and tension in healthy ways; and their ability to make safe and healthy choices (Figure 9).

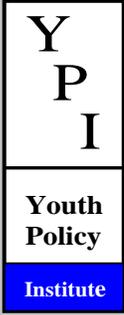
Parents and caregivers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program as a whole and with the quality of the staff in particular. They perceived that the intervention made significant inroads into promoting the positive attitudes toward school and improved intra-familial interactions. They also overwhelmingly reported that MOST had improved the social and emotional well-being of their children.

Figure 9
Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of the Impact of MOST on Improving Social and Emotional Well-Being



For further information about this edition of the Elementary Correspondent or about the evaluation of the Auburn Enlarge City School District's Elementary MOST project, please contact:

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CONCLUSION

The parent/caregiver survey indicates a high level of satisfaction with all the salient components of the MOST program. It is evident, from their responses, that MOST counselors made extensive and effective efforts to thoroughly explain the program and to encourage parental involvement at various levels, including monitoring of progress, routine interactions with the therapists, use of supportive strategies recommended by therapists, and accessing ancillary services.