



Public Schools of North Carolina  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

NC Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse  
Services

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# Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

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Education of Children in Private Psychiatric  
Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs)

*SL 2014-100 (SB744)*

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Jointly Prepared By:

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Mental  
Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services

and

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
Exceptional Children Division

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## **Education of Children in Private Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs)**

This is a joint report as required by NC General Statute 122C-454 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) have assumed the responsibility of the qualification and disbursement of funds for educational services in private Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs).

### **Leadership Team**

Staff from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Exceptional Children Division (EC), Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), and the Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) have continued to work together this State fiscal year (SFY) to ensure that children in Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs) are receiving an appropriate education and to ensure that the requirements of the legislation are met. The leadership team is composed of the following agency representatives:

#### Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division

- Sherry Thomas, Interim Director
- Carol Ann Hudgens, Section Chief, Policy, Monitoring and Audit
- Glendora Hagins, Monitoring Consultant; on-going assessment, monitoring, technical assistance and consultation to EC Programs.

#### Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

- Eric Harbour, Child Lead, Community Mental Health Section
- Mary Ellen Anderson, Project Manager; on-going execution and monitoring of PRTF education contracts for funding.

#### Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Service Regulation

- Stephanie Gilliam, Chief, Mental Health Licensure and Certification Section

### **Eligibility, Allocations and Contracts**

In SFY 2018, eighteen (18) contracts were initially executed to provide funding for educational services. The eighteen (18) parent organizations in North Carolina manage thirty-three (33) facilities. These facilities met the following requirements for funding:

- Licensed through the DHHS, DHSR, to provide PRTF services that fall under the requirements of the legislation.
- Non-public school registration with the NC Department of Administration, Division of Non-Public Schools.
- Approval of EC Programs by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Exceptional Children.

Allocations and budgets were approved by the EC Division and DMH/DD/SAS leadership teams as agreed upon in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between DPI and DHHS. Funding was allocated to providers to ensure teacher ratios were met, including the requirement of a licensed EC teacher if a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) was enrolled, and to ensure that quality educational services were being provided to students.

Contracts were terminated with three parent organizations during SFY18 following actions against their license by DHSR and subsequent withdrawal of EC Program approval by DPI.

A list of the parent organizations is attached at the end of this report.

## **Technical Assistance, Monitoring and Support**

### **PRTF Summer Academy**

For the 2017-18 school year, the PRTF Summer Academy was held on July 24-25, 2017, as a professional development session offered at the annual Summer Institute sponsored by DPI EC Division in Greensboro. The EC Division Consultant and the DHHS Project Manager served as facilitators of the session for the participants. Administrative and educational staff from each parent organization attended the session. The Director and Educational Consultant for Non-Public Education and PRTF staff served as presenters. The PRTF staff had an opportunity to participate in the other sessions offered during the Summer Institute, as well.

### **PRTF Collaborative Meetings**

DPI EC Division and DHHS sponsored two (2) PRTF Collaborative meetings on October 9, 2017 and April 10, 2018, in Raleigh. In these meetings, the administrative and educational staff received agency updates, professional development, and opportunities to network.

All parent organizations were represented at the fall meeting. Agenda items included updates from the Division of Non-Public Education (DPNE) and DHHS, program manual development, the EC Program Approval process, and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). The Director for DPNE was a presenter, in addition to DHHS and DPI meeting facilitators.

All but one parent organization participated in the spring meeting. Agenda topics included DPNE, DHHS, and DPI EC Division updates, a presentation about “Six Core Strategies and Building Bridges Initiative for Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities and Child Facility Based Crisis Services”, and Section 504. The Director of the DPNE, staff from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, and the DPI 504 Coordinator were presenters for the meeting.

Based on feedback after each meeting, 100% of the evaluation respondents indicated that they were “able to use the information for their job.”

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

Administrative and educational staff in the PRTFs are provided information about the annual Conference on Exceptional Children sponsored by the DPI EC Division in Greensboro. During the 2017-18 school year, conference and registration information were shared with the educational and meeting contacts for each PRTF. The 67<sup>th</sup> Conference on Exceptional Children was held November 15 – 17, 2017. For the third year in a row, educational staff from several PRTFs were afforded the opportunity to participate in the annual conference.

### **Website:**

DPI EC Division’s website serves as a resource for all special education programs. While the division maintains information specifically for PRTFs on its website, access to a wide-range of subjects is also available on the Division’s website to support the PRTFs’ educational programs for students with disabilities in the areas of:

- Conferences, Professional Development (PD) and Webinars to promote professional development;
- Disability Resources for information about a variety of eligibility categories and services;
- Instructional Resources to access a variety of instructional services;
- Parent Resources to provide support to families;
- Policies to ensure federal and state compliance for improved services for students with disabilities;
- Recruitment and Retention to support recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers with EC licensure;
- Directory of regionally and statewide assigned EC Division Consultants; and
- A calendar of professional development events and activities sponsored by the EC Division.

Specific information for the PRTFs can be found at - <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/non-public-schools> and links to general information can be located on the EC Division's homepage at - <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/>

### **PRTF Handbook**

The PRTF Handbook was collaboratively developed by DPI, EC Division, and DHHS, and continues to serve as a resource to the facility staff. The handbook provides guidance to the PRTF administration and educational staff focusing on the legislative, special education, and contract requirements. An electronic version of the handbook is available on the EC Division's website at – <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/non-public-schools/prtf-handbook.pdf>. Printed copies of the guidance document have been made available during on-site activities (technical assistance/support and monitoring visits), collaborative meetings, and the PRTF Summer Academy. This handbook also serves as a resource to staff in traditional schools and charter schools.

### **EC Program Approval Visits**

An initial EC Program Approval on-site visit was conducted for one (1) PRTF during the 2017-18 school year. Two (2) EC Program Approval renewal visits were also conducted during the school year. This visit was conducted by DPI EC Division Consultants in collaboration with the DHHS Project Manager.

The EC Program Approval process is conducted every three years to renew the facility's status as a program approved to provide special education services.

### **Technical Assistance and Support**

DPI, EC Division Consultants, and the DHHS Project Manager provide customized and individualized support to the PRTFs' educational staff through a variety of exchanges (such as phone calls, face to face contacts, and emails) in the areas of record requests, process and policy questions, transitions and discharges, budgets and contracts, etc.

### **Monitoring/On-site visits**

The DHHS Project Manager will conduct site visits to any newly licensed facilities recognized as a Non-Public School and EC Program Approval prior to initiating a contract for educational funding. Other site visits will occur to ensure compliance with contract requirements, as needed.

The DPI EC Division Consultants conduct on-site visits as a part of monitoring as outlined in the EC Program Approval process.

### **PRTF Self-Assessment:**

Each PRTF is required to annually submit the Self-Assessment to the DPI EC Division Consultant. This provides updates about the facility's academic and special education programs. The self-assessments are reviewed by the DPI Consultant and DHHS Project Manager.

### **Information Sharing**

PRTFs have been informed of the notification requirements to the DPI EC Division. A procedure is in place to report admissions and discharges and to request records from previous schools. A form letter has been developed and revised, as appropriate, to request records upon admission to PRTFs. A contact list of designated staff in the local education agencies (LEAs) who will assist with record requests and discharge planning when students are admitted to PRTFs has been developed and is updated annually. PRTF staff can also contact the EC Division Consultants and the DHHS Project Manager if assistance is needed with obtaining records or discharge planning.

### **Agency Collaboration**

The EC Division Monitoring Consultant and the DHHS Project Manager collaborated with the Division of Non-Public Education (DPNE) Director and Education Consultant throughout the school year. As a non-public school, PRTFs are also required to submit a DNPE Annual Report. Site visits are conducted on an as needed basis or at least every three (3) years.

### **Reporting Requirements**

A database spreadsheet was developed and implemented for the PRTFs with education service contracts. Data is reported to DMH/DD/SAS on a quarterly basis.

The contract PRTF agencies submitted the following data based on services provided from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018.

- **Number of Children served** – 1276
- **Average Daily Census** - 425
- **Average Age** –
  - Two facilities only serve latency-age children – generally ages 6-13. The average age in these two facilities was 9.5.
  - The remaining facilities serve adolescents – generally ages 12-17. The average age was 14.2.
- **Average length of stay** – 179 days
- **Number of Children with IEPs** (identified as Exceptional Children) – 457
- **Categories of Disability** - number of children in each category for children identified as Exceptional Children:
  - Autism – 7
  - Emotional Disability – 201
  - Multiple Disabilities -2
  - Developmental Delay -6
  - Intellectual Disability – 35
  - Other Health Impaired – 141
  - Learning Disabilities - 48
  - Speech/Language Impaired – 4
  - Visually Impaired – 1
  - Not specified - 13

### **Types of Educational Services Provided**

Types and hours of services provided were determined by each child's IEP. Children received an average of 118 days of general education services. Children with IEPs received an average of 111 hours of EC Instruction. The DPI EC Division Monitoring Consultant reviewed and verified special education services at each facility during the EC Program Approval process.

### **Costs of Services**

Ensuring that teacher ratios and EC requirements are met continues to be the priority for funding allocations. Funding allocations are based on the average daily census reported by each parent organization. In SFY18, DHHS requested reimbursement of \$2,799,627.22 from DPI for education services. As noted under *Eligibility, Allocations and Contracts*, two contracts were terminated during the fiscal year. Due to the timing of the terminations it was not feasible to reallocate the funds in these two contracts to other programs during the fiscal year.

### **Outcomes**

Client admission and discharge from a PRTF is based on medical necessity and mental health/substance use treatment recommendations for each individual child by the child's treatment team and the Utilization

Management. Children are admitted and discharged to PRTFs throughout the school year and are served by other school systems prior to and following placement in the PRTF. Measuring individual child education outcomes for the period a child is placed in a PRTF is a challenge.

Five hundred eighty-seven (587) children were discharged during the year. Of these, two hundred seventy-eight (278) or 47% were discharged with an educational plan to return to a mainstream public school. Other discharge placements included day treatment, inpatient hospitalization, incarceration, home school, graduation, charter, home school and public alternative schools. Only seventy-three (73) or 12% were discharged without an education plan. The primary reason cited was unexpected discharge of the client which did not allow for educational planning and transition back to the community.

The Non-Public Exceptional Children Program Approval Process was developed and implemented through the DPI EC Division in 2014, after the PRTF Education legislation was enacted. Each licensed site has been assessed through an on-site monitoring visit by DPI EC Division consultants. Programs were initially granted provisional approval to allow time for the EC consultant to provide technical assistance and monitoring and for programs to receive necessary funding to meet requirements. Currently all contracted agencies have full approval of their EC program. Two (2) programs have had full approval of their EC program for three (3) years. Twelve (12) programs have had full approval of their EC program for two (2) years. One program has had full approval of their EC program for one (1) year.

### **Recommendations from the January 2018 Report with Results and SFY19 Recommendations**

#### **1. Increased collaboration between education and treatment staff in the PRTFs.**

PRTF education programs are more successful in carrying out requirements when treatment and education staff collaborate and plan together from the time of admission through discharge. Treatment and education planning, including development of treatment plans and IEPs, must involve treatment and education staff. Education staff must be kept informed of possible client admissions or discharges to improve transition planning.

- **SFY18 Result:** DPI Monitoring Consultant and DMH/DD/SAS Project Manager developed the outline for a required procedure manual that will include procedures that must be followed by administrative, treatment, and education staff to ensure education requirements are met. Requirements for the manual were provided to agency directors and education staff.
- **SFY19 Recommendation:** Completion of procedure manuals is required in the SFY 2019 agency contracts for education funding.

#### **2. Collaboration and coordination of efforts between the Department of Public Instruction, Department of Administration, Division of Non-Public Education, and the Division of MH/DD/SAS in providing oversight and monitoring of education services in PRTFs to ensure that all state and federal requirements are met.**

- **SFY18 Results:** The three agencies collaborated throughout SFY18.
- **SFY19 Recommendation:** DPI, DHHS and DNPE will continue to develop a strong, collaborative relationship. DNPE will continue to provide technical assistance and consultation to the PRTF programs regarding non-public education requirements.

#### **3. Improvement in the collection of data and reporting tools to provide more comprehensive data with a focus on outcome data.**

- **SFY18 Results:** The database was revised to align the reporting and collection process. Data collection remains a challenge. PRTFs are non-public schools; therefore, school data is not managed through the DPI database management system.
- **SFY19 Recommendation:** There should be ongoing improvement in collecting and reporting data focused on positive outcomes for students receiving treatment and educational services in PRTFs.

**Attachment  
Parent Organizations with Contracts for Educational Services In  
Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities**

**Alexander Youth Network**

**Anderson Health Services \***

**Barium Springs Home for Children**

**Brynn Marr Hospital, Inc.**

**Canyon Hills Treatment Facility**

**Elite Adolescent Care, Inc. \***

**Cornerstone Treatment Facility, Inc.**

**Cornerstone Treatment Facility Program, Inc.**

**Eliada Homes, Inc.**

**Premier HealthCare Services, Inc.**

**Premier Service of the Carolina, LLC**

**Nova, Inc.**

**Strategic Behavioral Health Center – SBH Charlotte, LLC \***

**Strategic Behavioral Health Center - SBH Raleigh, LLC**

**Strategic Behavioral Health Center - SBH Wilmington, LLC**

**Thompson Child and Family Focus**

**Veritas Collaborative, LLC**

**Youth Focus, Inc.**

**\*Contract terminated during SFY18**