



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

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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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**Submitted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
and/or State Board of Education, in conjunction with North Carolina  
Department of Health and Human Services**

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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 H. Thomas, Director
- Carol Ann M. Hudgens, Section Chief, Policy, Monitoring, and Audit
- Glendora Hagins, Monitoring Consultant; provides on-going assessment, monitoring, consultation and technical assistance and to the special education 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; Provides 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
- Azzie Conley, Chief, Acute and Home Care Licensure and Certification Section

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

In SFY 2019, fifteen (15) contracts were initially executed to provide funding for educational services. The fifteen (15) parent organizations in North Carolina manage thirty (30) 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.
- Registered as a non-public school with the NC Department of Administration, Division of Non-Public Education.
- Approved Exceptional Children Program 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 one parent organizations during SFY19 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**

### **EC Summer Institutes**

For the 2018-19 school year, information was provided to the educational staff at the PRTF for the opportunity to participate in the professional development sessions offered by the EC Division.

### **PRTF Collaborative Meetings**

DPI, EC Division and DHHS sponsored one (1) PRTF Collaborative meeting on April 11, 2019, in Raleigh. The PRTF group is fairly stable in its membership. One meeting was sufficient for PRTF-specific updates as we encourage staff to participate in the offerings provided through the EC Division Summer Institute and other regionally based opportunities provided through the professional development calendar. Technical assistance is provided on demand by phone and on site visits. At this meeting, the administrative and educational staff received agency updates, professional development, and opportunities to network. Agenda items included greetings from the new state EC Director, updates from DHHS, program manual development, the new policy for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) 2020, and a summary of the Retention and Recruitment Summit, compliance and reporting, and the EC Program Approval (ECPA) process. The key staff from DHHS and DPI served as the facilitators for the meetings. 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 DPI, EC Division in Greensboro. During the 2018-19 school year, conference and registration information were shared with the educational and meeting contacts for each PRTF. The 68<sup>th</sup> Conference on Exceptional Children was held November 14 – 16, 2018. For five consecutive years, 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 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 disability specific 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
- 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 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 local education agencies.

### **EC Program Approval Visits**

The EC Program Approval (ECPA) is the monitoring activity used to ensure that students with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education while they are receiving treatment in a PRTF setting. This activity occurs upon initial licensure as a PRTF and every three years to renew status as a facility approved to provide special education services. During the 2018-2019 school year, an on-site visit was conducted to reinstate the ECPA for one facility. Monitoring visits for ECPA renewal were also conducted at four (4) facilities. The visits were conducted by DPI, EC Division Consultants in collaboration with the DHHS Project Manager and contract staff.

### **Technical Assistance and Support**

DPI, EC Division Consultants, and the DHHS Project Manager provide customized and individualized support to educational staff in PRTFs through a variety of exchanges (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**

The DHHS Project Manager performs all monitoring activities required by DHHS for contract management and administration. The DPI, EC Division Consultants conduct on-site visits as a part of monitoring as outlined in the ECPA process.

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

Each PRTF is required to submit the ECPA Self-Assessment annually to the DPI, EC Division Consultant. This provides updates about the facility's academic and special education programs and documents services for the current school year. The self-assessments are reviewed by the DPI Consultant and DHHS Project Manager and are used to inform the EC Program Approval process.

### **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 able to submit the Non-Public School Annual Report online. On-site visits are also conducted by the DPNE Consultant.

## **Reporting Requirements**

A database 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, 2018 – June 30, 2019.

- **Number of Children served** – 1051
- **Average Daily Census** - 390
- **Average Age** – 14
- **Females** – 501
- **Males** – 543
- **Transgender** - 7
- **Average length of stay** – 190 days
- **Number of Children with IEPs** (identified as Exceptional Children) – 429
- **Categories of Disability** - number of children in each category for children identified as Exceptional Children:
  - Autism – 7
  - Emotional Disability – 183
  - Multiple Disabilities – 3
  - Developmental Delay – 5
  - Intellectual Disability – 34
  - Other Health Impaired – 134
  - Learning Disabilities – 50
  - Not specified – 13

These numbers do not include the statistics for a PRTF that specializes in children with eating disorders. The population served is very different than that of the other PRTFs. Statistics for this program are as follows:

- **Number Served** – 258
- **Average age** – 15
- **Female** – 233
- **Male** – 21
- **Transgender** – 4
- **Average length of stay** – 41 days
- **Number of Children with IEPs** – 7
- **Categories of Disability** –
  - Learning Disability – 4
  - Other Health impaired – 3

## **Types of Educational Services Provided**

The types and hours of academic services provided were determined for all children admitted in the PRTFs. The children received an average of one hundred eighteen (118) days of general education services. Children with IEPs received an average of one hundred fifty-five (155) hours of special education and related services. The DPI, EC Division Monitoring Consultant reviewed and verified special education services at each facility during the ECPA 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 SFY19, DHHS requested reimbursement of \$2,933,010 from DPI for education services.

As noted under *Eligibility, Allocations and Contracts*, one contract was terminated during the fiscal year. Due to the timing of the termination, it was not feasible to reallocate the funds from this contract 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. Six hundred forty- three (643) children were discharged during the year. Of these, five hundred forty- eight (548) or 85% were discharged with an educational plan. The primary reason cited for discharge for the remaining 15% without a plan 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 *Education of Children in Private Psychiatric Residential Facilities* 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.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. Increased collaboration between education and treatment staff in the PRTFs. 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. Education staff must be kept informed of possible client admissions or discharges to improve transition planning.**
  - **SFY19 Results:** Procedure manuals that address joint education and treatment procedures were developed. An emphasis was placed on standard operating procedures to ensure that notifications of admission and discharge were communicated with educational staff.
  - **SFY20 Recommendation:** DMH/DD/SAS has begun a statewide initiative to improve interventions in PRTFs. The DPI regional monitoring consultant and the DHHS contract administrator will collaborate with the Project Coordinator for the PRTF Residential Improvement Project to ensure that strategies incorporate both the clinical treatment and the education needs of youth in PRTFs. Transitions into the PRTF and back into the community following discharge are priorities of this initiative.
  
- 2. Continued interagency coordination of educational services 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.**
  - **SFY19 Results:** The three agencies collaborated throughout SFY19 to ensure that PRTF staff were kept informed of the agency requirements and updates.
  - **SFY20 Recommendation:** DPI, DHHS and DNPE will continue collaboration to provide cohesive technical assistance and support to PRTFs regarding non-public and special education requirements.

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

Alexander Youth Network

Barium Springs Home for Children

Brynn Marr Hospital, Inc.

Canyon Hills Treatment Facility\*

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 Raleigh, LLC

Strategic Behavioral Health Center - SBH Wilmington, LLC

Thompson Child and Family Focus

Veritas Collaborative, LLC

Youth Focus, Inc.

*\*Contract terminated during SFY19*