



SCAPPOOSE SCHOOL DISTRICT

We are committed to providing education that inspires students to embrace the challenges of the future.

“We prepare our students for the future”

March 4th, 2015

Submitted by: Catrina Knoerzer, District Social Worker, Scappoose School District

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

The Scappoose School District is in support of Senate Bill 135 which allows the Department of Education to provide funding for educational services for students who are enrolled in day treatment programs. However, this bill does not address the need for day treatment programs in communities that do not have access to these services. My duties as district social worker allow me to work closely with students and families who have a full understanding of the daily struggles and impact of childhood and adolescent mental health issues.

Day treatment programs are essential in providing services to our children who struggle with significant mental health needs. These services are nonexistent in Columbia County. We currently have five students who attend day treatment programs in other states/counties. This provides a challenge for our families to be active participants in the programs because of the distance these children have to travel to obtain necessary placement that can address their needs.

One particular student was attending a day treatment program in Multnomah County and then the family relocated to Scappoose, where there are no day treatment programs available. It took months for the school to locate a facility for him that would be able to meet his mental health needs. The student now has to travel to Vancouver, Washington on the bus every day for schooling. We have two other elementary students, who are twins, who also have to travel to Vancouver, Washington for a day treatment program. It is near impossible for the family to participate in the education process due to the family having five other children, three of whom attend school and two that stay home. Therefore, the family does not receive the wrap-around services that are needed in order for the family as a whole to deal with the stress and parenting issues that come with having children with high needs.

Another student who is in high school has struggled with suicide ideation for several years and has made many attempts on school grounds to harm herself. In my time working with the county's mental health provider in trying to find an appropriate educational setting for her it becomes frustrating due to the lack of services accessible to our families. It took months for the district to locate a facility that had openings and would be able to meet her needs. This facility is located in Beaverton. The distance again plays a crucial part in the success of this student and having the parent participate in the educational process.

In closing Scappoose School District supports Senate Bill 135 as these services are vital for students around the state. We continue to advocate for day treatment programs throughout our state, but also in the communities that don't have access to these services within their County.

Sincerely,

Catrina Knoerzer, MSW
District Social Worker