



★ Star View Adolescent Center ★

South Bay High School Celebrates its 20th Year!

BRIEF REPORT from the Department of Research and Program Practices

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The South Bay High School **opened in 1996** and is **fully accredited by WASC**.¹ It is an innovative nonpublic school where children with severe emotional challenges may advance their education through their Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and a specially designed curriculum with the support of credentialed instructors and experienced aides. Star View Adolescent Center combines a 16-bed psychiatric health facility for acute and sub-acute care, 40-bed community treatment facility and the South Bay High School on a single campus. This unique, well-integrated psychological trauma treatment center serves children needing intensive behavioral health services in a safe and secure environment, from over 25 counties across California including Los Angeles. This **BRIEF REPORT** covers results and initiatives over school years (SY) 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

Students:

Over the two years, 136 individual children resided at Star View Adolescent Center (average daily census of 52 children), with a median total length of stay (LOS) per youth of just over 11 months (range of 6 days to 4.5 years). Eighty children were newly admitted at the Adolescent Center in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, and the median age at entry was 15 years. Eighty-four children exited the Adolescent Center during this time; the median age at exit was 17 years. Twenty-seven percent of children exited at age 18, the maximum age for the Adolescent Center. Of enrolled clients, 77% were female and 23% male; 38% identified as Latino, 24% as African American, 22% as White, 2% as Asian and 13% as other/unknown. Seventy-five percent were from Los Angeles County, while the rest were from other California counties; most (all but five) of the children from other counties were placed in Torrance USD. Altogether, the children enrolled through six school districts. Common behavioral health diagnoses included depressive disorders (54% of children), PTSD (28%), substance use disorders (15%) and bipolar disorders (13%). All children met criteria for serious emotional disturbance that impacted their ability to function and to be safe at lower levels of care.

Services and Outcomes:

At South Bay High School, education and support for behavioral health issues are integrated and addressed through Special Education Individualized Education Plans, specialized curricula, and the expertise of highly trained instructors and staff. A therapeutic and rehabilitative Day Treatment Intensive program is also provided daily.

- Children receive treatment for behavioral health, to improve functioning and ease symptom distress – **during their time at the Adolescent Center, 82% showed progress overall; school functioning improved, as did their behavior toward others and their mood and emotions** (see chart of Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale CAFAS subscales on next page, n=51).
- Although new students face challenges adjusting to regular school attendance, the overall **South Bay High School attendance rate was steady at 91% for both years. Fifty percent of children regularly attended school (4 to 5 days a week) in the six months before coming to the Adolescent Center, while 78%**

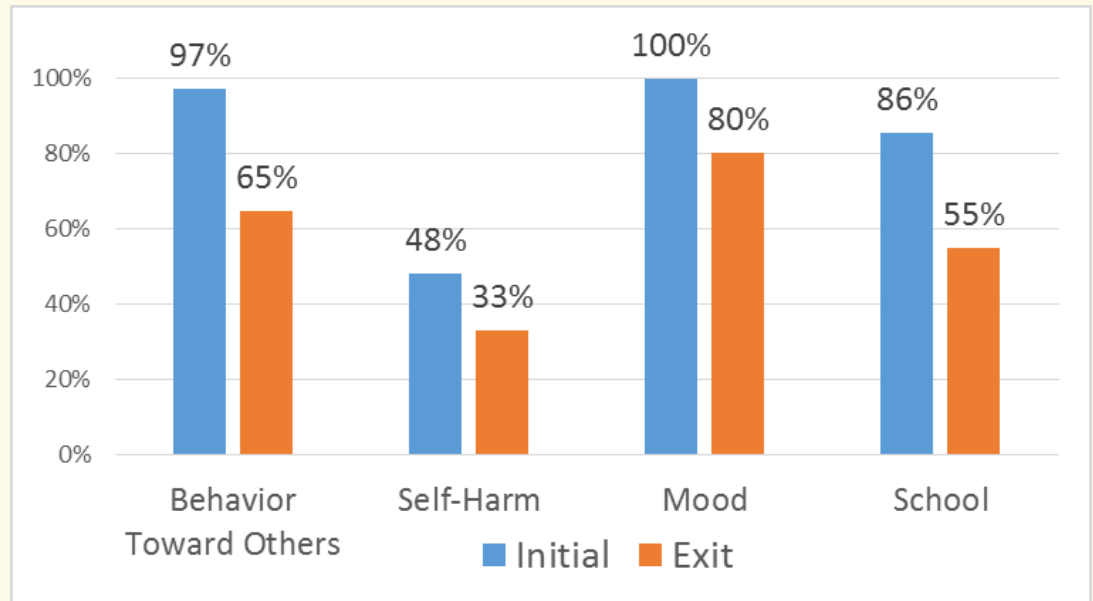
“Path to Success” Case Study

“Tara” (not her real name) was 17 years old and had been a resident in the Adolescent Center and attending the South Bay School for four years. Tara consistently struggled with school attendance due to the ongoing severity of her mental illness, and now in her senior year had significant deficiencies in her school credits. In a meeting with the school principal, Tara expressed a sense of hopelessness – due to her lack of high school credits, there was little hope of graduating on time, let alone within the next two years. The school principal, in consultation with the educational staff, suggested that Tara look at two alternatives for obtaining her high school diploma, the California Proficiency Exam or the GED. Tara expressed great interest in the alternatives, and a plan was created that allowed Tara to study for these exams during school hours using educational staff for support. Tara’s attendance increased over the next few months, and with the support of both clinical and educational staff, Tara was able to successfully sit for and pass the GED! Thus, she achieved a high school diploma prior to leaving the Adolescent Center at the age of 18.

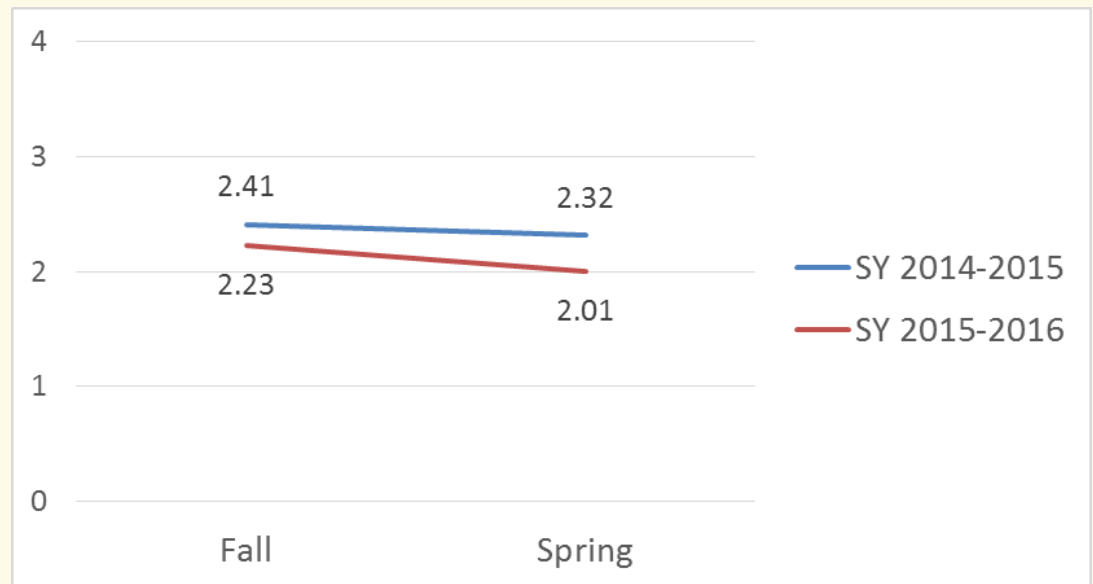
regularly attended school in the six months prior to their exit, a marked improvement during their time at the South Bay High School (n=79). Students with higher rates of voluntary absences are supported by daily check-ins from instructors; and, the Collaborative Problem-Solving frameworkⁱⁱ is being introduced for those with persistent voluntary absences.

- **The grade point average of students enrolled in Fall and Spring semesters of SY 2014-15 and 2015-16 ranged between 2.01 and 2.41, a strong performance** for children whose previous education was disrupted by challenges at home, complex traumatic life experiences and serious behavioral health issues (see chart to right).
- On average, students attempted 27 credits per Fall or Spring semester in SY 2014-15 and 2015-16. As can be seen in the chart on the following page, **students were able to earn an average of between 65% and 73% of those credits over these semesters, which is a substantial accomplishment.** The key to this was attendance; in a sample from June 2016, students who did not have high rates of voluntary absences (more than one day absent a week) passed their courses at a much higher rate (81%) than those who had high rates of voluntary absences (22%).
- Star View Adolescent Center’s Day Treatment Intensive (DTI) program provides intensive therapy and rehabilitation for children in individual, group and family contexts. **Attendance at school is strongest among children who also regularly attend DTI sessions, suggesting a relationship between having success at school and receiving the therapeutic benefits of the DTI program.** Our interdisciplinary teams are currently focusing QI efforts on DTI attendance.
- School work is complemented by the Adolescent Center’s **Workability program** in which participants enjoy learning about different careers, and learn resume writing and job interview skills. Recently, youth joined the Los Angeles Fire Department Life Guards for the day to learn about ocean safety. Workability activities help students’ motivation by highlighting the relevance of staying in school and progressing toward earning a high school diploma.

Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)
% Children with Moderate or Severe Issues at Initial and Exit Assessments
(Improvement represented by a decrease in the percent of children affected; n=51)



Grade Point Average for Fall and Spring Semesters
SY 2014-2015 and 2015-2016



- Annual satisfaction surveys help us track how the families and children we serve experience their time at the Adolescent center. Youth in Summer 2016 (n=51) reported that South Bay High School:
... **Helped them earn school credit 82%**

Families (n=78) said that South Bay High School:
... **Helped their child educationally 96%**
and that the Star View Adolescent Center provided a:
... **Safe, well supervised environment 96%**

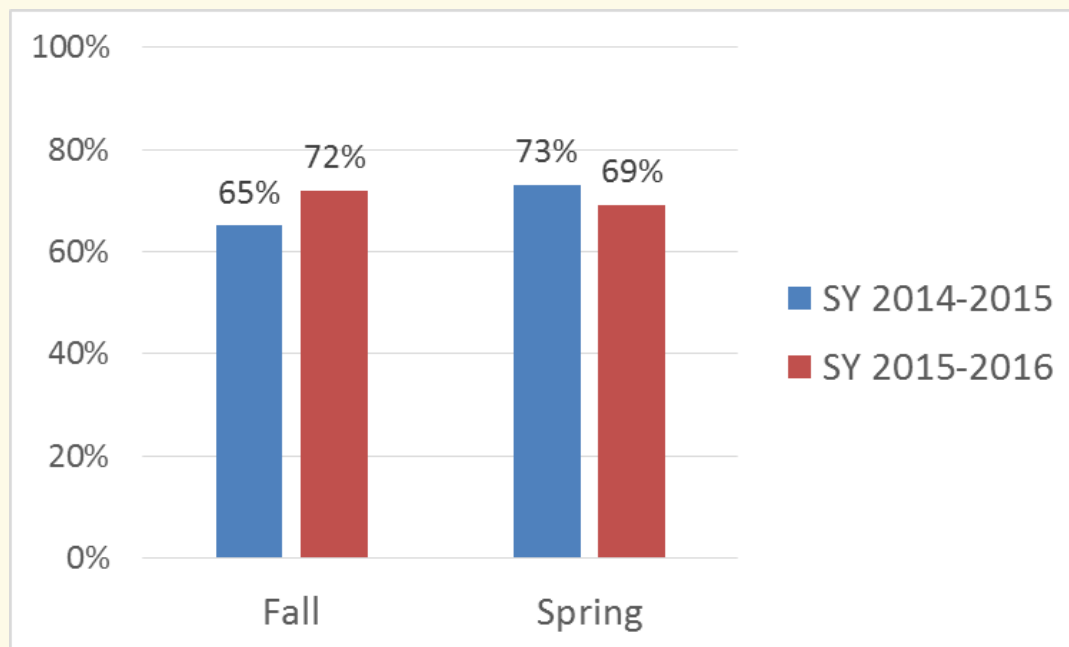
Current South Bay HS Initiatives:

- ★ **Maintaining a responsive relationship with the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD) and the other districts across the state that place youth and therefore retain education responsibility.**
- ★ **Improve upon classroom data collection and data management systems.**
- ★ **Refine school indicators: for example, measurements to better track interventions used in response to voluntary student absences.**

Adolescent Center staff continue to be supported with relevant trainings provided by SBHG, including:

- On-going Pro-ACTⁱⁱⁱ training and coaching to help maintain the safety of the children, minimize the use of seclusion and restraints, and ensure that when necessary, such practices are used safely with the minimum loss of personal rights.
- Trainings on: Externalizing and Internalizing Disorders; Identifying and Addressing Substance Abuse; ARC (Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency)^{iv} for

**Of Total Course Credits Attempted, % Earned
SY 2014-2015 and 2015-2016**



the treatment of trauma; Mental Health Care for Commercially and Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC); Transgender 101; and, LGBTQ 201.

Success in School!

Almost all students made progress toward earning their high school diploma while attending the South Bay High School! Although only a little over a quarter of children reside at the Adolescent Center until they turned 18, in the last two years, seven South Bay High School students celebrated earning their high school diplomas through graduation, the California State Proficiency Exam (CSPE; for those under 18) or the General Educational Development test (GED; for those 18 and over; see the “Path to Success” case study above). We plan to continue improving our curriculum, supporting staff development and working in every way to enhance children’s educational experience and results while at South Bay High School.

Star View Adolescent Center, a residential facility for adolescents with serious emotional disturbance, is part *Stars Behavioral Health Group* (SBHG), a statewide provider of behavioral health care and related educational and social services to children, adolescents, young adult and adults and their family members. South Bay High School is funded through the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD).

ⁱ Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accreditation Commission. South Bay High School was first accredited in 2007, and the next review cycle is 2020.

ⁱⁱ Interventions using the Collaborative Problem-Solving framework (<http://www.ccps.info/>) are designed to soften staff directives, increase willingness of clients to cooperate, and enhance client satisfaction rating in experiencing respectful treatment.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pro-ACT (<http://www.proacttraining.com/about/pro-act-is-principles-and-restraint/>) is a curriculum that covers the development of individualized safety plans, minimizing the use of seclusion and restraints, and ensuring that when necessary, such practices are used safely with the minimum loss of personal rights.

^{iv} Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency (<http://www.traumacenter.org/research/ascot.php>), developed by Bessel van der Kolk and his colleagues from the Trauma Center, provides a framework for working with youth and families impacted complex trauma.