



**Cumberland Regional High School
Colt Connection**

A School-Based Youth Services Program



90 Silver Lake Road . Bridgeton, NJ 08302 . Phone: 856-451-9400 x279 . Fax: 856-451-3298

Counseling . Recreation/Enrichment . Employment Readiness . Academic Support . Community Resources . Prevention

Aug. 31, 2020

Dear CRHS Colleagues, Families, and Community Members,

On Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2020, Gov. Murphy announced a proposed budget for the remaining nine months of the current fiscal year. To close an approximate \$50-million deficit in the Department of Children & Families budget, the Office of School-Linked Services, which funds School-Based Youth Service Programming (SBYSP), has been eliminated. Should the budget pass legislative vote at the end of September for an effective date of Oct. 1, 2020, the “Colt Connection” School-Based Youth Service Program at Cumberland Regional High School will close its doors permanently, leaving countless youth, families, staff, and the school and larger community without essential support services during what would be the 20th anniversary of SBYSP opening at this site.

Cumberland Regional High School leadership and Colt Connection’s collaborative lead agency CompleteCare Health Network remain hopeful that rallying the advocacy of both local and state legislators will bring light to the devastating blow the elimination of these programs will be to our schools and communities. We respectfully and humbly request you take a moment to add your voice to our community’s call to action.

Please contact your local representatives by phone, email, and/or letter to share the following sentiments

As a resident of [state your municipality], I am contacting you as a response to Gov. Murphy’s recent budget proposal that eliminates the Office of School-Linked Services within the Department of Children & Families. I have personally experienced the positive impact of the School-Based Youth Services Programs in my local school districts and community. I urgently implore you to explore alternatives to the elimination of the Office of School-Linked Services that will pull essential youth services from our public schools. School-Based Youth Services are provided before, during, and after school. SBYSP services include: Mental health counseling; employment counseling; substance abuse education/prevention; preventive health awareness including pregnancy prevention; primary medical linkages; learning support; healthy youth development; recreation; and information/referral. Now, more than ever as we transition back to in-person, hybrid, or remote learning, New Jersey youth remain at-risk for untreated mental health issues, abuse, neglect, violence, drugs and alcohol use, exploitation and trafficking, and teen pregnancy, while continuing to experience daily trauma, poverty, and more. The elimination of essential school-based mental health intervention and positive youth development opportunities is detrimental to the stability of our future generations. Thank you for your consideration

District 1 (Commercial, Fairfield, Greenwich, Hopewell, Lawrence, Maurice River, Millville, Shiloh, Stow Creek, Vineland) Senator Michael L. Testa Jr. Assemblyman Antwan L. McClellan Assemblyman Erik K. Simonsen Phone: 609-778-2012 School House Office Park, 211 S. Main St., Suite 104, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

District 3 (Bridgeton, Deerfield, Elmer, Pittsgrove, Salem, Upper Deerfield, Upper Pittsgrove)



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Senator Stephen M. Sweeney Assemblyman John J. Burzichelli Assemblyman Adam J. Taliaferro Phone: 856-251-9801 or 856-339-0808 935 Kings Highway, Suite 400, West Deptford, NJ 08086, or 199 East Broadway, 1st Floor, Suite G, Salem, NJ 08079

About the New Jersey School Based Youth Service Program Model

The School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) initiative was started throughout the State of New Jersey in 1987 to help young people navigate their adolescent years, finish their education, obtain skills leading to employment or continuing education, and graduate healthy and drug free.

Adolescents have numerous concerns and problems. Since a substantial number of teenagers have multiple problems that call for several different services, SBYSP provides an array of employment, health, and social services. Services are available to all youth and recreation is provided. In addition to the following core services, each site develops services which respond to local needs, such as on-site childcare, so that teen parents can stay in school.

The major services are: Mental health and family services Healthy youth development Access to primary and preventative health services Substance abuse counseling Employment services Pregnancy prevention programs Learning support services Family involvement Referrals to community-based services Recreation

About Colt Connection

The Cumberland Regional High School SBYSP, Colt Connection, was founded in 2001 and has directly served nearly 5,000 students in the CRHS community to date, making countless critical connections with our youth and their families, and working to meet their specific needs to build bright futures. In addition to individualized counseling, referral services, tutoring, and access to needs fulfillment, Colt Connection's partnership with CRHS has led to the success of initiatives including the Wawa Summer Youth Employment Program, the Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentor program, field trips, annual events such as the Freshman Orientation program, CRHS Veteran's Day Program and seasonal activities such as the Tex Robinson Memorial Thanksgiving Food Drive and holiday gift collection for families in need, career fairs, family engagement evenings, community events, and student celebrations surrounding graduation, homecoming, and prom, just to name a few. Over the past 19 years, Colt Connection has reached nearly 100,000 individuals in our community through these events.

Read more: www.crhsd.org/coltconnection Thank you for the continued support of School-Based Youth Services.

Sincerely,

Mr. Matt Lawrence-Evans MSW, LCW
Program Director, Colt Connection SBYSP