Clinicians provide services at the schools anywhere from one day per week to full-time during the school year and manage caseloads of approximately 90 students each. Only one clinician is assigned at each school, although the one clinician may split their time to serve more than one school in the course of a week. With total staff sizes — including clinicians and other staff — ranging from 20 to 30 people, the three providers experience overall turnover rates of roughly 15 percent to 30 percent. CarePartners has the lowest turnover rate (16 percent) of the three agencies. Of note, as a private provider, CarePartners is not bound to the state salary schedule. As quasi-governmental organizations, CSBs are required to follow a state salary schedule. Private providers are not required to follow the state salary schedule, and therefore have more flexibility in the salaries they can offer.

All three agencies employ a mix of licensed and associate-level behavioral health professionals, including Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Associate Professional Counselors (APCs), and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs). Associate-level clinicians — who are in practicum training in graduate school, or have obtained master’s-level counseling/social work degrees and are working toward obtaining the supervised work experience required for licensure — provide direct services, including behavioral health assessments; crisis intervention services; and individual, group, and family counseling. Services provided by associates are reimbursed at a lower rate than those conducted by licensed clinicians. Given this, associates are well-positioned to provide Tier 1 and 2 interventions, like skill-building in small groups for students, teacher training, and mental health awareness events in the classroom.

The providers offer associates the supervision required for licensure at no cost. This includes individual and group supervision, both of which are conducted weekly for one hour each. At Aspire, if an employee resigns or is fired before licensure, they are obligated to pay back the cost of supervision at a rate of $120 per hour.

All three agencies retain associate-level clinicians on staff after they become licensed, to the greatest extent possible. At Aspire, newly licensed clinicians are eligible to apply for the federal loan forgiveness program if they sign a two-year contract with the provider upon licensure.

Once licensed, clinicians receive weekly or monthly supervision in both individual and group formats. An LCSW provides supervision for all social workers, and a Certified Provider Credentialing Specialist (CPCS) or LPC provides supervision for all licensed professional counselors. Other disciplines, like Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs), are designated for supervision as needed.

In addition to the licensed and associate-level behavioral health professionals, Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs–Parent and Youth) and Community Support Individuals (CSIs) are also employed by some providers. Certified Peer Specialists provide engagement activities for students and their families, skills training and support groups for caregivers, and wellness recovery plan development. They also connect students and families to resources, and identify service gaps and remove barriers such that families are better supported. CSIs are paraprofessionals who similarly play an active role in service provision, meeting regularly with students and families for skill-building and case management, among other services. Services provided by both CPSs and CSIs are billable to insurance.

Physical Space

A dedicated space to provide services is important for success. Providers report that the size of the space varies across schools; however they are largely sufficient to accommodate sessions with students (and parents when necessary). At one Aspire school site, the clinician’s dedicated space has room for sensory stations, and one of the View Point sites has both a treatment room and a sensory room with different activities for students to address specific challenges. CarePartners’ clinicians have to be creative and flexible as space is limited at many of their school sites. When providers lack a dedicated space to provide care, they use the most discreet option available to them (e.g., a temporarily unused classroom or shared office). View Point reported that some of their schools lack additional physical space, which poses a barrier to expansion of their programs.