

Recovery High Schools Legislative Report - 2022

This report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021, line item 7061-9607.

April 2022

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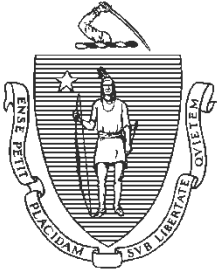
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Jeffrey C. Riley
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April 1, 2022

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature: *Recovery High School Programs Legislative Report - 2022*. As required by the statute, the enclosed report includes: “(i) the number of youths served per high school; (ii) outcomes measured for youths; and (iii) recommendations for new recovery high schools in fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023.” The data provided in this report was compiled from information submitted by schools to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department).

For adolescents in recovery from a substance use disorder, school is a setting that may result in interactions with peer groups who are actively using alcohol or other drugs. Unfortunately, after treatment, these students may encounter multiple risk factors when returning to the setting where their substance use problems originated. Recovery High School programs play an important role for these students by offering them another option for a school setting – one in which they can feel supported in their recovery while still working towards a high school diploma.

If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Samantha Graham, Substance Use Prevention and Intervention Specialist, in the Office of Student and Family Support via samantha.graham@mass.gov or 781-338-6305.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) respectfully submits the Report to the Legislature: Recovery High Schools Legislative Report – 2022, pursuant to [Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021](#), line item [7061-9607](#), that reads in part:

“For ...recovery high schools; provided, that the department of elementary and secondary education shall work collaboratively with the bureau of substance addiction services for the successful transition and continued operation of the recovery high schools model; and provided further, that not later than April 1, 2021, the department shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on ways and means that shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the number of youths served per high school; (ii) outcomes measured for the youths; and (iii) recommendations for new recovery high schools in fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023...”

[Recovery High Schools](#) (RHS) are public programs, operated by a school district or an educational collaborative, that serve as an educational option for students in recovery from a substance use disorder or dependency. They support students in their recovery while the students are concurrently working towards their high school degrees.

Recovery High Schools were initially established in Massachusetts in 2006 through a grant program administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH), funded through state line item 4512-0211. In 2009, [G.L. c. 71, § 91](#) was enacted to clarify several issues relating to these programs, including data reporting and fiscal responsibility. Under G.L. c. 71, § 91, Recovery High Schools receive the state average foundation budget per pupil for enrolled students from the students' districts of residence. Regulations related to RHS programs, [603 CMR 54.00](#), were adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in February 2017. An [advisory](#) (SPED 2019-1) was subsequently issued to address special education service delivery for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who are attending RHS programs.

In July 2018, oversight for the RHSs was transferred from DPH to the Department, as directed by the Governor and Legislature through the 2019 state budget line item [7061-9607](#).

There are currently five [Recovery High Schools](#) in Massachusetts:

- [William J. Ostiguy High School](#) opened in September 2006 in downtown Boston and is operated in partnership with the [Boston Public Schools](#).
- [Northshore Recovery High School](#) opened in September 2007 in Beverly and is operated by [Northshore Education Consortium](#).
- [Liberty Preparatory](#) opened in September 2007 in Springfield and is operated in partnership with the [Springfield Public Schools](#).
- [Independence Academy](#) opened in September 2012 in Brockton and is operated in partnership with [North River Collaborative](#).
- [Rockdale Recovery High School](#) opened in September 2015 in Worcester and is operated by [Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative](#).

In the spring of 2019, the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) was commissioned by the Department to conduct an evaluation of the RHS programming. The primary purpose of this study was to help inform the Department of the current practices of RHS programs and assist with the Department’s efforts to better support these programs. The summary evaluation report is available upon request from [Achievement@doe.mass.edu](mailto: Achievement@doe.mass.edu). As per the recommendations of the initial evaluation in the spring of 2019, the process to develop a more comprehensive evaluation began in the summer of 2021. The first phase of this work consists of the design, development, and planning of an initial cycle of instructional rounds and will continue in collaboration with the Department and RHS program leaders through the summer of 2022.

The Number of Students Served Per High School

Enrollment numbers vary among the five RHS programs ranging from a low of 3 students in one program to a high of 28 students in another. The following table includes the number of enrolled students from the October 2021 Student Information Management System (SIMS) for the five RHSs across the state.

	October 2021 Enrollment
Recovery High School	Students
Independence Academy	4
Liberty Preparatory School	8
Northshore Education Consortium	28
Rockdale Recovery High School	3
William J. Ostiguy High School	12

The table below includes the October 2021 SIMS by grade level, with the majority of the students (28 of 55) being identified as 12th graders.

Recovery High School	October 2021 Enrollment				Special Education Student Beyond 12 th Grade
	9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade	
Independence Academy	0	2	1	1	0
Liberty Preparatory School	1	3	3	1	0
Northshore Education Consortium	0	5	6	13	4
Rockdale Recovery High School	0	0	1	2	0
William J. Ostiguy High School	0	0	1	11	0

Outcomes Measured for Students

Recovery High School programs serve a complex population of students that require a specialized approach to balance the unique academic and therapeutic programming. These

programs enroll a significantly higher number of students with disabilities and those who are considered low-income as compared to the [state average](#). Those factors, combined with the inherent issue of a student body that has been diagnosed with a substance use disorder, create particular challenges to addressing the student’s needs. Recovery High School programs support these individual needs by developing and following an individualized recovery plan while providing a comprehensive four-year high school education that supports students to reach success in their academic and personal lives.

	Recovery High Schools	Massachusetts School Districts (Average)
Low-income	70.9%	43.8%
Students with Disabilities	41.8%	18.9%

Recommendations for New Recovery High Schools in Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023

The Department is currently in discussions with school districts, RHS programs, and other partners to determine how, collectively, to best meet the needs of students with substance use disorders. At this time, a new RHS is not recommended as the Department continues to evaluate these programs.