



## 2024 Report V1: Sharing Key Information by Living Sky School Division Important for High School Students with Significant Mental Health Concerns

Better ways needed to assess the level of mental health supports required for Division’s high school students

REGINA—June 5, 2024: In her *2024 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 4, Provincial Auditor, Tara Clemett, assessed Living Sky School Division’s processes to provide timely intervention services including student counselling within the schools or referrals to outside agencies to high school students with significant mental health concerns. She made seven recommendations.

Living Sky has over 2,500 students in Grades 7–12, which includes at North Battleford Comprehensive High School. Its Grades 7–12 survey results in 2022–23 showed students experiencing moderate or high levels of anxiety and depression worsened since 2015–16 from 21% to 32%—worse than the 2022–23 Canadian student average at 26%. We found for the students we tested, 40% of them seeing counsellors were in Grades 7 and 8.

The Division employed 12 counsellors (part-time and full-time) at its 13 high schools at November 2023.

We found the Division needs to assess counsellors’ caseloads to assess whether it allocates appropriate staffing resources to support high school students with significant mental health concerns. Our analysis not only found the number of students seeing counsellors on a regular basis steadily increased since the 2020–21 school year as well as at the three high schools (North Battleford, Unity, and Spiritwood) we tested, but also caseloads varied significantly between counsellors. For example, we found one counsellor responsible for over 820 students at three high schools who could potentially have mental health issues.

“Without effective assessments to inform resource allocations, there is a risk that students who need ongoing counselling may not receive it timely,” said Tara Clemett. “Also, having information sharing agreements with key outside agencies supporting high school students with significant mental health concerns could result in better coordinated support.”

We found Living Sky School Division also needs to:

- Formally track mental health emergencies (e.g., suicides, student deaths) and write critical incident reports as required by its Safe Schools Handbook to assist in assessing trends, root causes, and sufficiency of actions to potentially mitigate these emergencies.
- Have counsellors formally complete risk assessments and safety plans for students at risk of suicide to help inform appropriate support services (e.g., external referrals).
- Track student referrals to outside agencies (e.g., Saskatchewan Health Authority) and work with these agencies to develop information sharing agreements to help the Division assess the level of mental health supports (e.g., intensity and nature of supports needed, frequency of referrals) provided to students with significant mental health concerns. It would also help counsellors to know whether students who require mental health supports get the needed services outside of school hours.
- Evaluate and report key information (e.g., caseloads, critical incidents, outside agency referrals) to assess adequacy of intervention services provided.

Table 1— Number of Living Sky High School Students Seeing School Counsellors Each School Year

High School	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24 (up to November)	Part-time and Full-time Counsellors at November 2023
North Battleford Comprehensive	44	49	73	97	4
Unity Comprehensive	16	16	30	41	1
Spiritwood	7	12	27	27	1
<b>Totals—Living Sky School Division</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>Not Provided</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: Adapted from information provided by Living Sky School Division No. 202. Living Sky did not provide partial year information for 2023–24.

Poor mental health can negatively impact student engagement and achievement, as well as can affect student vulnerability to other at-risk behaviours such as substance abuse, suicide, and violence.

The full Provincial Auditor’s *2024 Report – Volume 1* available online at [auditor.sk.ca](http://auditor.sk.ca).



*The Provincial Auditor is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Office promotes accountability and better management by providing legislators and the public with an independent assessment and reporting of the government's use of public resources.*

For more information, please contact:

-30-

**Tara Clemett**, CPA, CA, CISA, *Provincial Auditor*  
306.787.6313 or [info@auditor.sk.ca](mailto:info@auditor.sk.ca)

**April Serink**, MA, *Communications Specialist*  
306.531.6163 [serink@auditor.sk.ca](mailto:serink@auditor.sk.ca) or [media@auditor.sk.ca](mailto:media@auditor.sk.ca)