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|  | Recovery High Schools  Legislative Report |
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| **This report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 227 of the Acts of 2020, line item 7061-9607.**  **May 2021** |
| Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  www.doe.mass.edu |
| ESE logo  This document was prepared by the  Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  Jeffrey C. Riley  Commissioner    **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members**  Ms. Katherine Craven, Chair, Brookline  Mr. James Morton, Vice Chair, Springfield  Mr. Jasper S. Coughlin, Billerica, Student member  Ms. Amanda Fernández, Belmont  Mr. Matthew Hills, Newton  Ms. Darlene Lombos, Boston  Mr. Michael Moriarty, Holyoke  Mr. James Peyser, Secretary of Education, Milton  Mr. Paymon Rouhanifard, Brookline  Ms. Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington  Dr. Martin West, Newton  Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner  Secretary to the Board  The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public.  We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.  Inquiries regarding the Department’s compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the  Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.  © 2021 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the “Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.”  This document printed on recycled paper  Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  www.doe.mass.edu  State Seal of Massachusetts | | |

***Massachusetts Department of***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

May 14, 2021

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature: *Recovery High School Programs Legislative Report*. As required by the statute, the enclosed report includes: “(i) the number of youths served per high school; and (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](mailto:samantha.graham@mass.govedu) 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 pursuant to [Chapter 227 of the Acts of 2020](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2021/FinalBudget), line item [7061-9607](https://budget.digital.mass.gov/summary/fy21/enacted/education/education-k-12/70619607), 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 School programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/rhs/) are public programs, operated by a school district or an educational collaborative, 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 degree.

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, M.[G.L. c. 71, § 91](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section91) was enacted to clarify several issues relating to these programs, including data reporting and fiscal responsibility. Under M.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](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr54.html), were adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in February 2017. An [advisory](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2019-1.html) (SPED 2019-1) was subsequently issued to address special education service delivery for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who are attending Recovery High School programs.

In July 2018, oversight for the Recovery High Schools was transferred from DPH to the Department, as directed by the Governor and Legislature through the 2019 state budget line item [7061-9607](https://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/app_19/act_19/h70619607.htm).

There are currently five Recovery High Schools in Massachusetts:

* [William J. Ostiguy High School](http://ostiguyhigh.org/) opened in September 2006 in downtown Boston and is operated in partnership with the [Boston Public Schools](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00350000&orgtypecode=5).
* [Northshore Recovery High School](https://www.nsedu.org/schools/northshore-recovery-high-school/) opened in September 2007 in Beverly and is operated by [Northshore Education Consortium](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/general.aspx?topNavID=1&orgcode=05460005&orgtypecode=4).
* [Liberty Preparatory](https://libertyprep.springfieldpublicschools.com/) opened in September 2007 in Springfield and is operated in partnership with the [Springfield Public Schools](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=02810000&orgtypecode=5).
* [Independence Academy](http://iarecoveryhs.org/) opened in September 2012 in Brockton and is operated in partnership with [North River Collaborative](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/general.aspx?topNavId=9001&orgcode=05440000&orgtypecode=3&).
* [Rockdale Recovery High](https://www.cmasscollaborative.org/Recovery_High_School) School opened in September 2015 in Worcester and is operated by [Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/general.aspx?topNavId=9001&orgcode=05180000&orgtypecode=3&).

In the spring of 2019, the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) was commissioned by the Department to conduct an eighteen-month evaluation of the five RHS programs in the state. 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 report describes the state’s RHS programs, as a whole, as a thriving and dynamic set of critical resources for some of the state’s most vulnerable students, staffed by dedicated and caring professionals who are carrying out academic and recovery activities under unique and challenging circumstances. Copies of the summary evaluation are available upon request from [Acheivement@doe.mass.edu](mailto:Acheivement@doe.mass.edu).

# The Number of Youths Served Per High School

Enrollment numbers vary among the five Recovery High School programs ranging from a low of 3 students at Rockdale Recovery High School and a high of 32 students at Northshore Education Consortium. The following table includes the number of enrolled students from the October 2020 Student Information Management System (SIMS) for the five recovery high schools across the state.

|  | **October 2020 Enrollment** |
| --- | --- |
| **Recovery High School** | **Students** |
| Independence Academy | 10 |
| Liberty Preparatory School | 7 |
| Northshore Education Consortium | 32 |
| Rockdale Recovery High School | 3 |
| William J. Ostiguy High School | 27 |

The table below includes the October 2020 SIMS by grade level, with the majority of the students being identified as 12th graders.

|  | **October 2020 Enrollment** | | | |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Recovery High School** | **9th Grade** | **10th Grade** | **11th Grade** | **12th Grade** | **Special**  **Education Student Beyond 12th Grade** |
| Independence Academy | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| Liberty Preparatory School | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Northshore Education Consortium | 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 2 |
| Rockdale Recovery High School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| William J. Ostiguy High School | 0 | 2 | 4 | 21 | 0 |

# Outcomes Measured for Youths

Recovery High School programs serve a complex population that requires a specialized approach to balance the unique academic and therapeutic programming. These programs also have the challenge of meeting the needs of students who are at a significantly higher percentage than the [state average](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&leftNavId=305&) of students with disabilities and who are considered economically disadvantaged.

|  | **Recovery High Schools** | **Massachusetts School Districts (Average)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 58.2% | 36.6% |
| Students with Disabilities | 38% | 18.7% |

The eighteen-month evaluation commissioned by the Department in the spring of 2019 found the majority of students highly valued their Recovery High School experience. As part of the study, the evaluators asked a series of questions to students (see Tables 1-3).

(Title) Most students strongly agree or somewhat agree that their RHS helps them build personal recovery capital regarding academics and plans for the future. 

Statement (and number of students responding) : % strongly disagree / % somewhat disagree / % somewhat agree / % strongly agree
- This school helps me meet my graduation requirements (n=61) : 5 / 0 / 16 / 79
- This school helps me think about my hopes and dreams, and how to achieve them (n=59) : 7 / 3 / 29 / 61 
- This school helps me explore my academic interests (n=61) : 8 / 5 / 41 / 46
- This school helps me think about my post-RHS plans and opportunities (n=61) : 8 / 11 / 28 / 52


*Table 1. Majority of students agree with statements that their RHS helps them build personal recovery gains regarding academics and plans for the future.*


(Title) Most students strongly agree or somewhat agree that their RHS helps them build personal recovery capital regarding substance use.

Statement (and number of students responding) : % strongly disagree / % somewhat disagree / % somewhat agree / % strongly agree
- This school helps me understand what's required for me to recover from my addiction (n=61) : 3 / 2 / 23 / 64
- This school helps me understand my addiction (n=61) : 5 / 5 / 23 / 67 
- This school helps me establish recovery rituals (n=61) : 5 / 5 / 43 / 48
- This school helps me deepen my commitment to recovery (n=61) : 7 / 8 / 31 / 54


*Table 2. Majority of students agree with statement that their RHS helps them build personal recovery gains regarding substance use.*

(Title) Most students strongly agree or somewhat agree that their RHS helps them build social recovery capital.

Statement (and number of students responding) : % strongly disagree / % somewhat disagree / % somewhat agree / % strongly agree
- This school has a unique culture that helps me feel a sense of belonging (n=61) : 5 / 7 / 25 / 64
- This school helps me learn about outside recovery resources (detox, AA meetings, etc.) (n=61) : 7 / 5 / 18 / 70 
- This school helps me form and maintain positive relationships with people who support my recovery (n=60) : 8 / 5 / 28 / 58



*Table 3. Majority of students agree with statements that their RHS helps them build social recovery gains.*

Recovery High School programs play an important role for students diagnosed with a substance use disorder. They support the individual needs of their students by developing and following an individualized recovery plan while providing a comprehensive four-year high school education helping these students reach success in their academic and personal lives.

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

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