

## An Overview of Metrics from School Year 2019-20

# Diploma On! Program

### Background

The purpose of Diploma On! is to re-engage students who have dropped out of school within member districts and ultimately increase the graduation rate in Hennepin County. Program staff obtain student contact information from identified referral sources within each district, normally after a 15-day drop. Next, they contact the student and/or caregiver to establish a relationship and attempt to reduce the barriers that are preventing them from attending school, with the goal of reenrolling the student in a program/school that fits their needs. Since its inception in spring 2012, at least 191 of students referred to the Diploma On! program have successfully completed their GED or received their high school diploma.

This summary presents some of the key data collected by program staff about the students who were referred during the 2019-20 school year. In addition, this summary includes the stories of two students who faced significant educational barriers but ultimately earned their high school diplomas with the support of Diploma On!.

### Referrals

Diploma On! has received 1,623 total referrals over the past nine school years. In the 2017-18 school year, program staff started tracking repeat referrals to determine how many current students had been served by the program in the past. In the 2019-20 school year, 308 referrals were received. Some of the referrals represent students who have been served by the program in the past. As of June 30, 2020, 84% of the referrals were for students that had never been referred to the program in the past (Figure 1).

#### 1. Number of referrals by school year

	# of referrals	% of new referrals
2011-12	37	N/A
2012-13	109	N/A
2013-14	90	N/A
2014-15	70	N/A
2015-16	48	N/A
2016-17	272	N/A
2017-18	335	87%
2018-19	354	82%
2019-20	308	84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,623</b>	

Note. Data collection processes changed in school year 2016-17 allowing the reporting of internal referrals. Therefore, the number of students increased because the program reported on both external and internal referrals, unlike previous years. In addition, the program started using a new data system in the 2019-20 school year.

## Program metrics

During the 2019-20 school year, Diploma On! staff received confirmation that 55 students referred to the program either earned their GED or high school diploma. Forty-nine of these students earned their high school diploma, while six students earned their GED (Figure 2).

It is important to note that some of these students may have earned their GED or diploma prior to the 2019-20 school year, and program staff were not notified until the 2019-20 school year. Program staff may also not have been notified regarding all students who earned their GED or diploma. In addition, it is impossible for some students to complete their high school requirements in the same year they are referred, due to a high number of credits still needed or other limiting factors.

### 2. GED/diploma status for students that Diploma On! received GED/diploma confirmation for during the 2019-20 school year

	# of students
Number of students who earned their GED	6
Number of students who earned their diploma	49

Note. This figure presents data by student, not by referral. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Diploma On! began collecting this data this school year; thus, the availability of data from previous years is limited.

To illustrate the impact of the Diploma On! program in helping students attain their educational goals, students were asked to share their experiences. Diploma On! has received permission from this student to publish their experience here, and a pseudonym is used to protect the individual's privacy.

Alex was referred to the Diploma On! program late in the 2019-20 school year. According to Minnesota state statutes, students are only eligible to continue receiving free public school education until the September after their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. With limited time left before Alex would turn 21, program staff first tried referring Alex to online summer classes. Unfortunately, Alex had a difficult experience in online classes, but program staff quickly pivoted and enrolled Alex in an alternative learning center (ALC). The ALC was a much better fit, and Alex has since graduated and received their high school diploma. Alex plans to attend North Hennepin Community College in the fall of 2020.

When asked about their experience in the Diploma On! program, Alex shared, *"Thank you so much. I couldn't have done it, honestly, without [Diploma On!]. I hope you know I'm extremely grateful for your help. It means a lot to know I have people supporting me."*

As of June 30, 2020, 42% of students were actively enrolled and attending an educational program (Figure 3). Nearly a third of students were not enrolled or attending a program (31%).

Program staff often provide case management services to students regardless of whether they are considered enrolled or not enrolled. Staff regularly attempt to connect with students referred in the 2019-20 school year unless their status is designated as “graduated,” “closed,” or “GED,” though some students continue to receive limited support after graduating or earning their GED. In addition, students designated as “not enrolled” may still receive significant support or resources from program staff, despite not being enrolled in an educational program. Staff may also have made initial contact for some students designated as “not enrolled,” including providing support and resources, but staff then encounter difficulties maintaining contact with the students and/or their caregivers.

### 3. Current status of student on caseload

	# of students	% of students (N=291)
Enrolled	121	42%
Not enrolled	91	31%
Initial contact	54	19%
Graduated	18	6%
Closed	6	2%
GED	1	<1%

Note. This figure presents data by student, not by referral. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

#### Definitions for Figure 3:

**Enrolled:** The student, family, or school has reported that the student is actively enrolled and attending an educational program.

**Not enrolled:** The student, family, or school has reported that the student is not actively enrolled or attending an educational program.

**Initial contact:** The assigned DO! case coordinator has been unable to connect with the student or family, but is continuing to attempt contact through various methods.

**Graduated:** The student, family, or school have reported that the student graduated with a high school diploma.

**Closed:** The student, family, or school has firmly denied services for the student at this time and in the future OR the student has reported that they have moved out of the area.

**GED:** The student, family, or school have reported that the student has passed all GED tests.

School staff may have tried alternative interventions before referring students to Diploma On!. The most common interventions were suggesting alternative school (24%) or online courses (14%; Figure 4). Sources are able to select multiple interventions or no interventions.

### 4. Prior interventions used

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
Suggested alternative school	73	24%
Suggested online courses	42	14%
Suggested flexible/shortened day	24	8%
Met with mental health professional	25	8%
Met with chemical health professional	18	6%
Suggested working with be@school	29	9%
Other (e.g., offered credit recovery, check-ins, parent meetings, changing schools, changing housing, homebound services, IEPs, Job Corps)	42	14%

When a student is referred to the program, the referral source also includes information on the barriers the student faces in attending school. According to referral sources, mental health challenges are the most common barrier (17%), followed by unstable housing (10%) and chemical health (7%; Figure 5 and 6). Sources are able to select multiple barriers or no barriers, and barriers are identified by the referral source, not by the student. Figure 6 is a visual representation of the number of referrals facing each barrier as reported by referral source, with larger words indicating a higher frequency.

**5. Barriers to staying in school**

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
Mental health	51	17%
Unstable housing	32	10%
Chemical health	23	7%
Transportation	13	4%
Lack of engagement	7	2%
Physical health	5	2%
Work	8	3%
Other (i.e., conflict with teachers, family conflict, family responsibilities, hearing loss, in foster care, legal issues, peer conflict/bullying, potential learning disability, poor school fit, teen parent/ pregnancy, experienced traumatic event)	18	6%

**6. Word cloud of barriers to staying in school**



To demonstrate how Diploma On! helps students overcome significant barriers to completing their high school education, one student’s experience is published here. Diploma On! has received permission from the student, and a pseudonym is used to protect the individual’s privacy.

Although Jordan had fewer than 5 credits left to complete to graduate, they faced multiple barriers to completing these remaining credits, including work-related scheduling conflicts, caring for their young child, IEP requirements, and unreliable transportation. With the help of Diploma On!, Jordan was able to re-enroll in an alternative learning center (ALC), navigate the unexpected challenge of distance learning due to the coronavirus pandemic, and earn their diploma in June 2020 while continuing to work and care for their family. They plan to attend trade school in the future.

Social workers referred half of all referrals received by Diploma On! in the 2019-20 school year (Figure 7). Some referrals originated from school counselors (17%) and principals/deans (6%). Referrals most frequently originated from the Osseo Area School District (29%) or Intermediate District 287 (27%). Nearly 1 in 5 referrals originated from the Robbinsdale Area School District (19%).

**7. Referral source and district**

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
<b>Referral source</b>		
Social worker	153	50%
School counselor	51	17%
Principal/Dean	19	6%
Other (e.g., parent/caregiver)	29	9%
Missing/unknown	56	18%
<b>Referral district</b>		
Osseo Area School District	89	29%
Intermediate District 287	84	27%
Robbinsdale Area School District	58	19%
Hopkins Public Schools	26	8%
Brooklyn Center Community Schools	17	6%
Eden Prairie Schools	9	3%
Other (i.e., Edina Public Schools, St. Louis Park Public Schools , Orono Public Schools, Richfield Public Schools, Westonka Public Schools)	11	4%
Missing/unknown	14	5%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## Student demographics

Referral sources also collect demographics on the students referred to the Diploma On! program, including birthdate. Student birthdates were used to calculate student ages at the time the referral was opened in the Diploma On! database. Referrals were most frequently for 18 year olds (28%) and 17 year olds (23%; Figure 8). A third of referrals were for students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade (33%), and more than a quarter of referrals were for students who are behind on the credits they need to graduate (28%).

### 8. Age and grade

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
<b>Age at time of referral</b>		
14	9	3%
15	28	9%
16	47	15%
17	71	23%
18	86	28%
19	48	16%
20	15	5%
21	3	1%
Missing/unknown	1	<1%
<b>Grade in school</b>		
9	21	7%
10	35	11%
11	64	21%
12	101	33%
12 + (behind on credits needed to graduate)	86	28%
GED or Transitional	1	<1%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Nearly half of referrals were for students identified as Black or African American (48%), and 15% were for students identified as White (Figure 9). In addition, 14% of referrals were for students identified as Hispanic; however, ethnicity data was not explicitly asked for during the referral process. More than half of referrals were for students living in their parental home (56%). Fourteen percent of referred students currently have an individualized education program (IEP); however, more than half of referrals are missing this data (56%). Similarly, 5% of referrals were for students identified as current English language learners, but more than half of referrals are missing this data (58%; Figure 9). Nearly 1 in 5 referrals were for students who report a language other than English as one of the two main languages spoken in their home (18%). It is important to note that this information is reported by the referral source, with the expectation that the referral source is using information provided by the student and/or their caregivers.

## 9. Race, living situation, individualized education program (IEP) status, and languages spoken

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
<b>Race</b>		
Black or African American	149	48%
White	47	15%
Multiracial (includes students identified as two or more races and students identified as Hispanic and another race)	35	11%
Asian	14	5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	2%
Other (i.e., Hispanic; missing specified response)	29	9%
Missing/unknown	28	9%
<b>Current living situation</b>		
Parental home (biological or adoptive)	172	56%
Emergency shelter or homeless with or without parent	19	6%
Relative/extended family home	13	4%
Other (i.e., independent living, on run, foster home, hotel, staying with friends/acquaintances/partner)	17	6%
Missing/unknown	87	28%
<b>Current individualized education program (IEP)</b>		
No	92	30%
Yes	42	14%
Missing/unknown	174	56%
<b>Current English language learner</b>		
No	114	37%
Yes	16	5%
Missing/unknown	178	58%
<b>Language spoken at home</b>		
At least one of the two main languages spoken in home is not English	55	18%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Diploma On! referrals include information on the most recent school the student was enrolled in. Referrals were most frequently for students most recently enrolled at Park Center Senior High School (23%; Figure 10). It is important to note that some students may have not ultimately attended the school, and some students may have been enrolled within specific programs at the school, such as online programs.

#### 10. Most recent school/program student enrolled in

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
Park Center Senior High School	72	23%
North Education Center Academy	37	12%
Robbinsdale Academy - Highview	32	10%
Gateway to College	24	8%
Hopkins High School	22	7%
Robbinsdale Armstrong High School	16	5%
West Alternative Learning Center (W-ALT)	14	5%
Osseo Area Learning Center	12	4%
Robbinsdale Cooper High School	11	4%
Brooklyn Center High School	9	3%
Eden Prairie High School	7	2%
South Education Center Academy	7	2%
Maple Grove Senior High	6	2%
Early College Academy	6	2%
Osseo Senior High School	5	2%
Other (i.e., Ann Bremer Education Center, Bozeman High School, Edina High School, Metro South Adult Basic Education, Minneapolis Public Schools [school unspecified], Minnesota Internship Center, Mound Westonka High School, Northview Middle School, Orono High School, PSEO, Richfield High School, St. Louis Park High School)	20	6%
Missing/unknown	8	3%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.



The Osseo Area School District was the most frequently reported resident school district for referrals received during the 2019-20 school year (34%), followed by Robbinsdale Area School District (22%; Figure 11).

## 11. Resident school district

	# of referrals	% of referral (N=308)
Osseo Area School District	106	34%
Robbinsdale Area School District	67	22%
Hopkins Public Schools	29	9%
Minneapolis Public Schools	26	8%
Brooklyn Center Community Schools	18	6%
Eden Prairie Schools	14	5%
St. Louis Park Public Schools	8	3%
Wayzata Public Schools	9	3%
Shakopee Public Schools	6	2%
Other (e.g., Anoka-Hennepin School District, Bloomington Public Schools, Columbia Heights Public Schools, Edina Public Schools, Fridley Public Schools, Orono Public Schools, Richfield Public Schools, Rockford Area Schools, St. Paul Public Schools, Westonka Public Schools)	25	8%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.