

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | October 14, 2020

Human Services awards children's behavioral health pilot grant to two ND schools

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division announced today that it has awarded funding for the expansion of a children's behavioral health prevention and early intervention pilot grant to Dunseith Public School and Barnes County North Public School near Wimbledon, N.D.

The two school districts together will share up to \$150,000 to build a comprehensive strategy to improve children's behavioral health in school settings by using a fully-integrated continuum of support that includes health promotion, primary prevention, treatment and recovery that can be shared with other North Dakota schools in the future.

"Prevention and early intervention are keys in creating a system that supports a child's overall mental health and well-being," said Laura Anderson, the division's assistant director. "These schools will continue to look for opportunities to help bridge gaps between behavioral health and our state's education system."

In 2018, Simle Middle School in Bismarck was awarded the first pilot grant to integrate behavioral health prevention and early intervention strategies into existing educational and support systems for students. Last session, North Dakota lawmakers provided funding to expand the behavioral health pilot grant to a rural and tribal school.

Barnes County North Elementary School Principal Danielle Bosse said, "We are excited to develop a comprehensive behavior plan to enforce consistency throughout our building and enhance relationships to be proactive in our fight against the mental health issues in children."

One resource that will help guide the prevention and early intervention pilot grant is a workbook created by educators and administrators from Simle Middle School. It outlines step-by-step their implementation process, which the new grantees will be able to utilize and customize based upon their enrollment size and behavioral health needs of their students.

Anderson said, "Representatives from Simle Middle School will play an instrumental role in rolling out the expanded pilot grant by sharing lessons learned and mentoring representatives from the Dunseith and Barnes County North public schools for the next year."

"Dunseith Public School is beyond grateful to have been awarded the behavioral health grant," said Dunseith Public Middle School Principal Kerry Azure. "We are looking forward to using the grant to help improve and support our student's education and mental health."

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The children's prevention and early intervention pilot grant is part of an effort to enhance the state's behavioral health system. It supports recommendations included in a North Dakota Behavioral Health Study to invest in prevention and early intervention, expand community-based services, and enhance and streamline the system of care for children and youths.

All North Dakota public and private elementary and secondary schools were eligible to apply for the funding. Each school had to complete an application and project narrative that identified current behavioral health needs and gaps within their system. School officials also described how they would enhance their current behavioral health framework, ensure sustainability and measure outcomes.

The Behavioral Health Division offers many resources at no cost to all schools and community members to support the behavioral health of children and families through the Parents Lead program at www.parentslead.org

The division is responsible for reviewing and identifying service needs and activities in the state's behavioral health system to ensure health and safety, access to services and quality services. It also establishes quality assurance standards for the licensure of substance use disorder program services and facilities and provides policy leadership in partnership with public and private entities. For more information, visit www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov.

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