



# OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

## House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

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Olathe Public Schools
- B) [anssalava@olatheschools.org](mailto:anssalava@olatheschools.org)
- C) HB 2444—Mental Health Intervention Team Program Act
- D) Proponent
- E) March 8, 2023

### **Overview:**

The Olathe Public Schools (OPS) has a comprehensive mental health program that serves each student's needs. This program is a result of the Olathe Public Schools Strategic Plan. The mental health program comprises mental health workers and resources funded by the district, Kansas, and private partnerships. The Olathe Public Schools has had a Mental Health Intervention Team since Fall 2020 when it was awarded a grant for two Mental Health Liaison positions. That number expanded in the 2022-23 school year to 5 Mental Health Liaisons who serve Olathe's 30,000 students.

School-based mental health services are important to meeting the myriad of mental and behavioral health needs that impede students' ability to learn. When these services are provided in school, many barriers to treatment, such as transportation, parents missing work, children losing lots of class time, mental health stigma, and funding are removed. Additionally, as our district and many other districts have shown, mental health services in schools have high efficacy. For these reasons, we call on our state and local government partners to continue their investment in mental health services in the school setting. Moving the MHIT Program from pilot status to permanent status will allow school districts to ensure that students will always have access to quality mental health services.

### **Olathe Public Schools Mental Health Intervention Team:**

Through the MHIT Grant, the Olathe Public Schools employs 5 licensed therapists who serve as the district's Mental Health Liaisons. The Liaisons collaborate with 4 licensed therapists from Johnson County Mental Health to connect students and their families to all the services the Mental Health Center provides.

The Mental Health Liaisons can provide the following services: individual counseling, group therapy, classroom consultations, collaboration with school-based teams on mental health needs, crisis services, and provide education to staff, parents, and community meetings. Each of our district's 58 buildings can request Mental Health Liaison services.

### **After School and Summer Programs:**

Student mental health needs do not end at the end of the school day or when school is not in session. The Mental Health Liaison program helps to allow the district to provide services to families who wish not to access them through the school day. The Olathe Help Clinic is offered during the school year and the Olathe Summer Help Clinic is offered when school is not in session. The Olathe Help clinic is offered from 4-6 p.m. two days a week. Individual and group counseling are offered to all OPS students and all services are free of charge.

The Olathe Summer Help Clinic is offered from May through the first week in August three days a week from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The Summer Help Clinic is open to all students, parents, and staff members of OPS. Groups and individual services are provided. In addition, behavioral consultations are available and parent support groups are held. All services are free of charge.

### **Data:**

In addition to the data required through the MHIT grant, Olathe Public Schools collects data on the services Mental Health Liaisons provide to students.

#### **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Therapeutic Group:**

Of the students who have completed the 10-week CBITS group, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms decreased by 39.2%, Anxiety symptoms reduced by 28.7%, and Depression symptoms reduced by 43.7%. Ninety percent of all students who have gone through the program made clinically significant progress. For Spring Semester 2023, there is currently 1 CBITS group and 3 BounceBack groups (the equivalent elementary group) taking place.

#### **Help Clinic:**

In Fall 2022, 72 students had individual therapeutic sessions and 33 students attended groups. Using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), 47% of students' total difficulties scores decreased in value, 60% of students' impact scores decreased, 40% of students' emotional symptoms and hyperactivity sub-scores decreased, and 33% of students' conduct problems scores decreased in value.

#### **Summer Help Clinic:**

In Summer 2022, 187 clients were seen; 41 in a group setting. 604 individual sessions were held. In feedback data (48 respondents), 100% said the clinic is helpful for people experiencing stress or mental health needs, 100% said that most people experiencing stress or mental health needs would find the clinic helpful, 100% would recommend the Summer Help clinic to their friends, 100% said their child liked spending time with their therapist at the Summer Help Clinic, and 97.9% were glad their child came to the Summer Help Clinic. Using the SDQ, 43 students increased their strengths.

### **Anecdotal Data:**

Student and parent feedback are a great barometer of our program's efficacy. Rate of usage and feedback help us to know that our programming makes a difference.

- A Mental Health Liaison shared that a 5<sup>th</sup> grader she is working with is making significant progress. At the beginning of the school year, she did not come to school most days and when she was at school, she was withdrawn. With the help of the Mental Health Liaison, who is working with her on strategies to identify and manage her anxiety as well as ways to increase her self-confidence, she has been coming to school regularly, is a more active participant in class, and is interacting more with peers. This student's mother emailed the Mental Health Liaison to report that her daughter enjoys meeting with her and finds it helpful.
- A Mental Health Liaison shared that she is working with a family that has 4 foster students. Each student needs therapeutic interventions. Through her work, all students are successfully integrated into the school environment and are making academic and social progress.
- **From a student note to a Mental Health Liaison:**
  - I wouldn't be where I am without your help along the way. Thank you for giving me a safe spot to go to when I need it the most as well as helping me receive reassurance that I'm not alone and giving me options/advice to make me feel worthy.
- **From a student to a Summer Help Clinic Therapist who is a Mental Health Liaison:**
  - I wanted to say thank you for taking the time to be my therapist this Summer and for helping me with my depression and anxiety. Thank you for being a great listener and for teaching me all those great coping skills.

### **Support:**

The MHIT Pilot Program is making a difference in the lives of students in the Olathe Public Schools. Through the services provided, students are better able to learn and build skills that allow them to become productive citizens. Therefore, as it meets the legislative goals of the Olathe Public Schools, I humbly request it be passed.

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