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Cohoes to add behavioral health center at middle school

New program developed in partnership with Northern Rivers

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Tuesday, September 12, 2017



COHOES, N.Y. >> Families of students with behavioral needs in the Cohoes City School District now have a school-based behavioral health center where they can find additional resources for their child.

District officials met Tuesday morning in the library at Cohoes Middle School to announce a partnership with Northern Rivers Family of Services to open and staff the center, which will offer state-licensed counseling services to children and families from throughout the district. Officials said the middle school provides a central location within the city to access support more easily than traveling to Troy or

Albany, limiting the amount of school time students miss.

The center, which will complement existing district services, will serve an estimated 70 to 80 students and families, with professionals available not only during school hours, but also during vacations, with on-call availability 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to assist people struggling with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, mood disorders, addiction, problems with controlling impulses, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, personality disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, thoughts of suicide, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder and similar behavioral issues.

“One in five adolescents has or will suffer from mental illness,” said David Rossetti, chief officer of behavioral health services for Northern Rivers. “Early intervention and consistent support can make all the difference.”

“The statistics are clear; there is a critical role for us as educators to address the myriad health issues facing our students,” added district Superintendent Jennifer Spring. “We’re taking a true community schools approach and bringing the services right into school, making it more convenient for our families.”

The center will be the ninth in the region operated by Northern Rivers member agency Parsons Child and Family Center. Cohoes joins South Colonie and Albany among Albany County school districts offering Northern Rivers behavioral health services, and county Executive Daniel McCoy said these services are a valuable tool in addressing behavioral issues.

“The expansion of these school-based services will enhance early intervention services in the community when it is needed,” said McCoy. “This approach has proven successful in the county and has provided positive outcomes for kids.”

The center will operate on a fee-for-service basis, accepting Medicaid, commercial insurance and private payments on a sliding scale.

“As a long-term health care professional in Cohoes, a former mayor and current member of the [New York State] Assembly, I am pleased to see this partnership with Northern Rivers and the Cohoes City School District at what is a critical time in a young person’s life in our community,” said Assemblyman John McDonald III, D-Cohoes. “Behavioral health is a critical component of a child’s life that is often overlooked. This partnership

brings licensed professionals into the education environment to help those individuals in need. This will play a role not only in their educational performance, but their quality of life.”

Northern Rivers also has an office on Mohawk Street in Cohoes, offering community-based programs and support for serving parents with young children and other community members. Families interested in the health services available at either facility are advised to should talk to their child’s doctor and ask for a referral or reach out to their child’s school social worker.

URL: <http://www.troyrecord.com/general-news/20170912/cohoes-to-add-behavioral-health-center-at-middle-school>

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