



For Immediate Release: School-Based Therapy Program Expands to Manatee County

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The Florida Center for Early Childhood has been selected by the Manatee County School District to expand its nationally-accredited school-based therapy program to 10 elementary schools with the highest need.

An estimated one in 10 children is coping with a mental health issue severe enough to impact their lives at home, in school, and in the community, according to the Center for Disease Control. However, many do not receive the services they need. School-based mental health therapy helps to bridge that gap, by providing counseling services to children during their school day (with parental consent).

“Ultimately, we are increasing access to services by circumnavigating the barriers,” said Dr. Kristie Skoglund, CEO of The Florida Center. “Families in crisis don’t always have the means to nurture mental wellness due to schedules, finances and transportation. This program normalizes therapy and makes it convenient for the family.”

Therapists also support the child's family at no out-of-pocket expense. Students are referred into the program through a tiered recommendation process for a variety of reasons including aggression, anxiety, defiance, trauma, and grief.

Additionally, school-based therapists also work with the child's teacher and other educational staff through coaching and consultation. The process has helped schools become more trauma-informed, shifting the perception of children's actions.

“It’s a holistic approach to mental wellness,” said Skoglund. “The parents, teachers and administrators are all involved and all working together to encourage those high-risk children to succeed in reaching their full potential.”

The Florida Center already provides school-based therapy to all 25 elementary schools in Sarasota County. More than 700 students were helped through the program last year and the initiative is making a difference. A recent survey conducted by The Florida Center found that 100 percent of school administrators said the program had a positive impact on the school, improving the overall dynamic. The same survey found that 95 percent of student clients made progress in their mental health goals.

“The School District of Manatee County is happy to partner with the Florida Center for Early Childhood this year,” said Superintendent Cynthia Saunders. “Their record of success with schools and families is evidenced in the work they have done in other counties.”



Child well-being and thriving communities go hand-in-hand. Research shows that intervention at an early age benefits society -- directly affecting the outcomes such as special education placement, grade retention, high school graduation rates, employment, and social welfare programs.

About The Florida Center:

For more than 40 years, The Florida Center for Early Childhood has been the leading provider of therapeutic services, early education and healthy development for young children in southwest Florida, offering a seamless delivery of services for the child and their family. Today, the agency is nationally recognized for its early childhood expertise in a variety of specialties. The Florida Center provides developmental therapies, mental health counseling, Starfish Academy preschool, the Healthy Families home-visiting program, and the state's only Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders clinic. For more information, visit www.thefloridacenter.org or call 941-371-8820.