

STRIDE

STRIDE: The Door County Collaborative School Mental Health Project is an initiative dedicated to removing barriers to access to quality mental health treatment for Door County youth by providing opportunities for mental health treatment one day a week within each of the five Door county school districts by October 1st 2018. This initiative has been in the planning and policy creation process for over one year, and is only months away from being launched during the 2018-2019 school year. Currently involved and dedicated parties include: Southern Door, Sturgeon Bay, Sevastopol, and Gibraltar school districts, Bellin Health, Door County Human Services, Counseling Associates, the Door County Medical Center and the United Way of Door County who is working as the coordinating entity as well as the fiscal agent and the official 501(c)(3) for STRIDE. By providing in-school access to mental health treatment, we hope to remove one of the many barriers that exist for students throughout our county who would otherwise have no opportunity to see a mental health professional.

How would you define the impact your organization is making in Northern Door County?

It is difficult to open a newspaper or go online today without reading about the nationwide challenge we are facing surrounding access to quality mental health treatment. This rings true throughout Northern Door County as well, especially due to our unique geographic positioning. Door County has an extremely low number of mental health providers, with most being concentrated in the city of Sturgeon Bay. Wisconsin ranks 11th for adult mental health, but 42nd in the nation in youth mental health with high depression rates, and low treatment for youth with mental illness. In Wisconsin, 1 and 10 children qualify as being dual diagnosed (more than one diagnosis, i.e., depression *and* anxiety) which translates into 66,896 to 80,275 Wisconsin children ages 9-17 having these issues and requiring treatment. This information is from the Department of Public Instruction Mental Health Framework.

Door County, while incredibly attractive to tourists and residents alike, also has many year round residents who live at or below the poverty level and are struggling to pay base line bills like rent, electric, groceries, and health insurance. Mental health treatment, due to its expense, is seen by many as a luxury. STRIDE is committed to removing the biggest barrier that exists to accessing mental health treatment by bringing quality mental health treatment directly to the schools, one day per week (at minimum) starting October 1st 2018, and turning no student away due to inability to pay.

The potential impact of this initiative is immeasurable because the lives of Door County youth are invaluable. The students STRIDE will seek to serve are the population that would otherwise not be able to access mental health services, due to either cost or location of provider or lack of providers.

Unfortunately, it is not only the socioeconomic barriers that exist which prevent our county's most vulnerable population from seeking mental health treatment - it is cultural as well. There is a stigma that exists around mental health treatment which forces many Americans, regardless of age, to suffer and struggle in silence. If we can create a program that reaches our county's youngest residents, and therefore normalize conversation about mental health, we may be able to shift our county's belief about mental health discussions and treatment altogether and abolish the stigma.

If you were to receive a donation from 100+ WWC, how would that donation be used?

If STRIDE received a donation from 110+ WWC, the money will go toward three crucial components:

First, the funds will be used to pay the mental health providers for their time with the students who are unable to pay for the services or do not have insurance coverage for mental health care. Many times, students who are the most in need of mental health treatment are also the students who are without health insurance or are unable to pay for the services. Mental health treatment can range anywhere from \$50 - \$250 per session, which is a financial burden for many Door County students and families. STRIDE is currently working to establish an agreed upon hourly fee to be paid to the providers for the time spent with the students who do not have health insurance and/or are unable to pay.

Secondly, STRIDE will reimburse providers for their mileage at the current IRS rate of 54.5 cents per mile. The IRS rate is adjusted annually. When we begin to provide services to the Washington Island School District, anticipated start fall of 2019, we will also reimburse for ferry costs. At this time, 100% of STRIDE mental health providers are located in Sturgeon Bay. We are currently in conversations with a provider from Northern Door to see if they would be interested in joining STRIDE to help provide additional service hours to students. STRIDE acknowledges that barriers exist for providers as well, and is committed to eliminating barriers for all.

The final way in which the funds will be used is to provide consultation time between mental health providers and teachers/staff at the school. As we all know, "it takes a village". We believe that if STRIDE can provide the funds for dedicated training/communication time between providers, staff, and teachers; and for time in the classrooms that STRIDE will ultimately impact each student, meaning STRIDE will have a more lasting impact and higher success rate.

Notes from meeting presentation:

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, there are at least five students with serious mental health needs in every classroom in Wisconsin. According to Mental Health America's annual report, Wisconsin ranks 11th in access to treatment

for adult mental health, showing a low prevalence of mental illness, and high rate of access to care. Unfortunately, using those same parameters, we rank 43rd out of 51 youth.

In the northern part of our county alone we see numerous children struggling with mental health disorders like depression and anxiety on a daily basis. In fact, the results of the most recent Youth Risk Behavior survey tells us that 15% of Door County student respondents have experimented with prescriptions drugs that do not belong to them. 14% of Door County student respondents stated they have considered suicide, and 5% said they have attempted suicide in the past 12 months. To boil this down to real numbers, this is 10 students in a high school of 200. In 2017, 23% of Door County Human Services crisis calls (41 of 178 calls) were for youth age 18 and under experiencing serious suicide thoughts or ideations. These include youth ages 18, down to six years old.