



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHFS, KDE partner on framework to improve student care and wellbeing

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 3, 2019) - The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) are collaborating on a framework to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of Kentucky's youth, called Kentucky CARES.

Kentucky CARES is a grassroots prevention campaign aimed at addressing the risk and protective factors associated with multiple forms of youth violence in schools, homes and communities.

"This platform seeks to empower students, parents and caregivers, educators and mentors to engage with youth to promote resiliency and reduce vulnerability and violence," said Adam Meier, CHFS Secretary. "By promoting engagement and participation with and among youth, Communities are Acting to Reach, Engage and Support (CARES)."

Students are uniquely positioned to lead this campaign by starting and participating in programs that encourage positive peer engagement and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health services.

"I have encountered thousands of talented, caring students in my travels to schools across the state, and I am truly excited to see the ideas they can bring to the table to

problem solve some of the biggest issues facing our schools,” said Dr. Wayne Lewis, Jr., KDE Commissioner.

Head to <https://chfs.ky.gov/Pages/KyCares.aspx> for program ideas. The website also contains resources for parents and caregivers, as strong family support is integral to youth success.

As an example, **The Dinner Table Project** promotes the idea that families who eat together have better relationships. **Watch D.O.G.S.** is another program highlighting the positive impact of fathers through volunteer service in school activities.

Finally, since children and teenagers spend a significant portion of their day at school, educators and mentors have an important leadership role. Studies indicate a positive relationship with a teacher can inspire student confidence and reduce aggression.

Teachers across the country are implementing new strategies to identify and help students who may be struggling to engage with their peers.

“Kentucky CARES provides a window into this research and offers ideas for mentoring programs, bullying prevention and greater student participation,” Secretary Meier added.

In conjunction with the launch of Kentucky CARES, CHFS received final approval for a Medicaid state plan amendment that will increase health services in schools.

“The Medicaid state plan amendment will allow school districts to seek additional federal fund reimbursement to expand access to qualifying physical and mental health services for students enrolled in Medicaid,” explained CHFS Deputy Secretary Kristi Putnam.

Senate Bill 1, the comprehensive school safety legislation passed in the 2019 General Assembly, set goals for addressing behavioral health needs. However, the law did not include a dedicated funding stream to provide the services. It is anticipated that the expansion of the state plan amendment will provide opportunities to assist with a portion of SB 1 funding needs for eligible services and students.

The change to Medicaid will be phased-in during the current school year, and approval for eligible direct services reimbursements to school districts is retroactive to August 1, 2019.

Examples of services that could be covered include: physical and behavioral health screenings, immunizations, dental care, speech therapy supports and mental health counseling.

CHFS and KDE are developing additional guidance that will be available to school districts on program requirements and operating procedures. More information is available at chfs.ky.gov.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.