

School safety grant to provide online mental health resources

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There are a lot of approaches to making schools safer. Pitt County has invested in secure corridors, more school resource officers, new access-control systems and fencing in strategic locations.

Now Trillium Health Resources is introducing another strategy — providing resources for student mental health services.

The agency has launched an online training and resource portal for schools, students and parents that targets everything from bullying and anger management to signs of eating disorders and emotional distress.

The online portal — <https://safeschoolshealthykidsnc.org> — was made possible by a grant through the North Carolina School Safety Grants Program. While the initial grant will fund two years, Trillium plans to continue the program through additional grants or internal funding.

According to the state's Department of Health and Human Services, youth in eastern North Carolina have a higher mortality rate — 71.9 per 100,000 — than the North Carolina average of 58.9 per 100,000.

Even more telling, a 2018 analysis found that Trillium's coverage area has a high number of requests for more services for teenagers with special needs, teacher training to assist children affected by trauma and attention to the mental health of children in minority groups and households experiencing poverty.

This data reflects a need for increased access to services for students, along with more training and resources for teachers and school personnel, according to a news release from Trillium.

This new grant will provide access to training resources that could affect K-12 students and more than 15,000 academic and professional staff in the region, which includes Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Columbus, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, Jones, Martin, Nash, New Hanover, Northampton, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell, and Washington counties.

Trillium's safe schools portal will provide web-based access to a variety of resources, and materials, the agency said. Specific programs include Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) and Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems, (MATCH-ADTC).

"Trillium is making a real commitment to our schools and rural areas by expanding access to resources that improve mental health and overall well-being for all children and communities," said Cindy Ehlers, executive vice president at the agency. "We are dedicated to helping all citizens of eastern N.C. have healthy opportunities to grow and learn."

Kym Martin, executive director of the Center for Safer Schools, said the center is pleased to provide support for Trillium Health Resources to provide training to increase school safety.

"Making this program available to teachers, school support staff, and parents has the potential to positively affect more than 193,000 K-12 students," Martin said. "We look forward to seeing results from this innovative platform."

By providing free online access to training and resources, programs can be completed by teachers or staff privately, at any time of the day and at a person's own pace. Tip sheets and handouts can be downloaded by students and parents, the news release said.



Evaluation of the project will include feedback on the ease of access, availability of trainings, and measuring fidelity to the learning process itself through quizzes and tests.

Trillium Health Resources is a local governmental agency that manages mental health, substance use, and intellectual/developmental disability services in eastern North Carolina.