

ONSLow COUNTY SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

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A plan to bring mental health services to Onslow County students during the school day is expected to begin sometime this school year.

The Onslow County Board of Education heard a presentation Tuesday on a plan for a partnership between Onslow County Schools and Trillium Health Resources that will arrange for mental health providers to address student needs in the school setting.

No action was taken by the board, but plans are being finalized to implement the program.

“We’re very excited about the opportunity,” said OCS Executive Director of Student Services Brendan Gartner.

Trillium Health Resources, a specialty care manager for individuals with substance use, mental illness and intellectual/developmental disabilities in Eastern North Carolina, has awarded PRIDE in NC the opportunity provide the school-based mental health services.

Gartner said Trillium conducted a community needs assessment in the spring and identified two major areas of need: a day treatment program and school-based mental health services.

He said recent studies reiterate the need.

“Recent studies show 1 in 5 students between ages 12 and 15 will be diagnosed with a mental health issue,” he said during the presentation.

Schools will identify students in need of services and complete an established referral process that includes parental consent. If determined eligible, individual therapy services on campus would be available during the school day.

Gartner said it helps to relieve the burden on families due to transportation or other issues.

Services can be provided to any student regardless of the family's economic status. Pride in NC can also make referrals for other mental health services.

“As far as schools are concerned, PRIDE in NC will be the point of contact,” Gartner said.

There is no cost to the school district for providing the services, which are covered by Medicaid, private insurance or other funding to PRIDE in NC.

Through grant funding, the school district will employ two mental health/behavioral specialists to provide support and training for teachers to help them address mental health needs of students so they can be successful in the classroom.

“Teachers face mental health issues in the classroom every day but they are not mental health providers,” Gartner said.