



Office of the Director

August, 2018

RE: School-Based Behavioral Health Programs Expanding in DC Public Schools

Dear Parents and Guardians of students in DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools,

We are excited to announce the District will begin **expansion** of a multi-tiered, school-based behavioral health system for all DC Public Schools and all Public Charter Schools in the 2018-19 school year. We know that student mental health and well-being are directly linked to academic achievement. We also know that a large majority of our children are in need of social-emotional and mental health support; and this expansion, using a coordinated approach to student behavioral health, will help ensure all of our students have the behavioral health tools to succeed.

Over 50 schools have been identified to begin the expanded services for this new school year, (2018-19) as determined by need with behavioral indicators. [Here is the list](#) of schools ranked by behavioral health indicators. The expansion is expected to reach all schools over the next three years. But even in the first year, all schools will have the opportunity for their school and provider teams to come together to learn, collaborate, and strengthen their understanding and skills in providing school mental health services. Additionally, the District continues to support all schools to continue to increase the availability of school-based mental health professionals to help and support students.

What does this new Expansion mean for schools?

The first group of schools will begin or continue to build programs and resources to support the behavioral and mental health needs of their students. These resources may be provided by your schools, DC agencies such as Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and DC Health, and/or community organizations. This model of multi-tiered services supports our community's common vision to provide access to prevention, screening, early intervention, and intensive mental health services for all public school students.

What does this new Expansion mean for parents and students?

Your school will have a lead coordinator for behavioral health services identified and parents will be informed about resources and staffing assignments so you know who to contact about concerns, questions about services and for support.

Your school will be working directly with DBH and possibly with community organizations to support services and staffing of your school's Mental Health team that best meet your school's individual needs.

Implementation of this expansion is being guided by the new Coordinating Council on School Mental Health, which is comprised of school leaders, government agencies, community providers, parents, youth, and school behavioral health experts, and led by the DBH. We invite you to learn more about their work and follow the Council's progress at <https://dbh.dc.gov/node/1321801>.

I look forward to working in collaboration with our stakeholders to achieve our shared goal of ensuring every student can access high quality behavioral health services, and that we make the most of the District's resources to accomplish this vision.

If you have questions please contact Deitra Bryant-Mallory at deitra.bryant-mallory@dc.gov for DC Public Schools and Audrey Williams at awilliams@dcpsb.org for DC Public Charter Schools.

Sincerely,



Tanya A. Royster, MD