

School Mental Health Spotlight

LAKELAND AREA SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

MAR 2019

Lakeland Area Consortium – First Year with Project AWARE

Introduction & Background

In 2019, the Lakeland Area School Consortium received the Project AWARE Grant. The Lakeland Area School Consortium includes five separate school districts; four K-8 elementary schools and one high school. The schools are Arbor Vitae-Woodruff School District, Lac du Flambeau School District, Minocqua J1 School District, North Lakeland School District, and Lakeland Union High School District.

In this initial year of the grant we have had several successes in our implementation of school-based mental health services including the introduction of several mental health therapists. These therapists are now providing their services at each of the five schools.

Key Players at the Table

Project AWARE has created partnerships with several therapists and several County based services including, but not limited to, Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), Emergency Services Program (ESP), and the Coordinated Services Team (CST). Project AWARE has created strong partnerships with these agencies that currently provide these services. Project AWARE is now involved in the Vilas County CST Committee, Oneida County CST Committee, the Vilas County Youth Coalition, the Comprehensive Community Services Coordinating Committee and the Lakeland Area Consortium Autism Committee.

Universal Approaches to Wellness

Project AWARE has continued to support the implementation of the Coping and Support Training (CAST) programming in the Lakeland Area School Consortium. The evidence-based and universal approaches involved in CAST has shown significant benefits to at-risk students including increased mood management, decreased drug involvement, decreases in suicide risk factors and increased protective factors for students.

Improving the Referral Pathway

Project AWARE has begun the development of a web-based referral pathway that is accessible to students, staff and community members. The website is being

constructed with all five of the consortium districts being involved in the design and roll-out process. The website is not specifically linked to one district and addresses the unique needs of each district while providing quick & understandable access to our area's Mental Health resources.

With the Lakeland Area School Consortium encompassing over 800 square miles and being the largest district area in the state, it was evident how important providing more convenient access to these supports/providers is to our families.

Outcomes

So far Project AWARE's big initiatives have been to get therapists up and running in our schools. The Lakeland Area School Consortium's Project AWARE is proud to say that we are currently serving over 140 students in our consortium with mental health services in the first 6 months of the Project AWARE Grant.

Project AWARE has also focused on building the Consortium brand and collaboration between our schools. Collaboration between districts on how to best serve our students while maintaining the identity/cultural beliefs/ and traditions of our unique schools is important for students who benefit from consistency in approaches/supports provided at the schools.

Due to having a lack of mental health resources and providers in the area, the Consortium saw the start of a waiting list for mental health services for its students. With this as a major hurdle for the area the Project AWARE team in the Lakeland Consortium has created a partnership with Ozaukee Community Therapies. The Lakeland Consortium now has MOUs in place for each of the 5 districts to include telehealth services as an additional avenue to access resources in order to assist students in getting the services they need more quickly.

Student Experience

Project AWARE would say the biggest difference for our students is the consistent, convenient access to providers with school-based mental health services. With the Lakeland Area School Consortium encompassing over 800 square miles and being the largest district area in the state, it was evident how

important providing more convenient access to these supports/providers is to our families.

Families in rural Wisconsin are consistently finding transportation as a barrier to connecting students with supports/providers. Providing school-based mental health services increases attendance rates for services and helps strengthen the student/counselor relationship, which as a result can lead to better success for these services.

Partnership with Families

Project AWARE believes partnerships that increase the well-being of students impacts every member of a community. When we support our youth we are helping families, communities, and our futures. Increasing a family's ability to access services in the school setting assists families to see the investment schools have in that student and that student's overall health & well-being. This investment in a student's well-being builds a relationship with the family, and that creates partnerships.

Serving Underrepresented Students

Project AWARE is focusing on closing the gap for those students that are underrepresented and underserved in our community by increasing those student's engagement in our schools. Students that deem school a safe, trusted environment feel appreciated, safe & comfortable. This begins by providing consistency with supports throughout the consortium. Implementing effective approaches that have shown fidelity with students throughout their education can help a student build skills, gain confidence and increase community investment. All these traits lead to better outcomes for students. The consistent implementation of these successful interventions and approaches increase youth engagement in becoming partners toward their own well-being.

SUBMIT YOUR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SPOTLIGHT STORY

info@schoolmentalhealthwisconsin.org

Submitted by:

Adam Nowak nowak@lakelandunion.org

Josh Schroeder Schroeder@lakelandunion.org



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