

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

SUBJECT: TELEHEALTH COUNSELING

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has established the Department of Mental Health Assistance which provides a number of interventions to ensure effective and successful educational outcomes. Many activities, programs, and services are being provided in M-DCPS and the outstanding work of the Department of Mental Health Assistance can be enhanced by the possible development and implementation of a telehealth counseling pilot program pursuant to School Board Policies and to all state and federal laws.

Telehealth counseling can provide a simple, convenient, confidential way to receive high-quality counseling, right online. It may be available anywhere there's a computer, a smartphone, or a tablet with video capability and an internet or data connection. Participation in a virtual counseling session can be accessed anywhere.

This past August, Florida's First Lady Casey DeSantis announced the installation of telehealth portals in 63 public schools throughout six counties in Northwest Florida to provide mental health services to students still recovering a year after the disastrous impact of Hurricane Michael. Each school will have one portal in a centralized location as determined by the school. After the student makes the original contact, a guidance counselor prepares a referral and written consent from a parent or legal guardian is secured. The student will then have the opportunity to speak one-on-one in private with a mental health service provider who will assess, diagnose, and if necessary, begin to treat the student. Parents will also have the ability to call into the session via a mobile app or receive a summary from the provider following the session if they are unable to participate. The entire telehealth counseling program developed in the Northwest Florida schools is in full compliance with all HIPPA laws. This concept of having telehealth counseling portals in a centralized school location is just one example of how a program can be developed and implemented. There are many other telehealth options that may be considered to provide mental health services to students in our school communities.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to explore the feasibility of developing and implementing a telehealth counseling pilot program in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and report back to the Board by December 4, 2019.