

# WEST SHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT



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Superintendent of Schools

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Good morning. My name is Todd Stoltz, and I am the superintendent of the West Shore School District. Today, I am also joined by one of our social workers, Amy Gross. We thank the Members of the House of Representatives and everyone participating in this Hearing for your interest in addressing the mental health needs of children in our communities.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the District sought a partner to provide individual therapy and group counseling in the school setting to District students with mental health concerns. To this day, we continue to contract with a provider for these school-based services.

The initial contract, which was approved in February 2017 for the remainder of that school year, was \$36,000. In subsequent years, we have continued our relationship with our provider, and the District spent approximately \$128,000 in the 2020-2021 school year. Fortunately, the District is able to use Medical Access funds to assist in providing these services.

At the outset of the original contract, we expected services to be billed to public and private insurance to the greatest extent possible, recognizing there would be occurrences when therapy and counseling would be billed to the District. Shortly after services began, we learned that several insurance carriers would not cover services provided within the school setting. In other words, the services would be covered in the office setting, but those same services would not be covered in the school setting. After more than 18 months and the assistance of many people, including Representative Delozier, we were able to make significant progress in this effort. In Spring 2019, Capital Blue Cross indicated the services would be covered, and with that, some issues were resolved.

While we were excited that more services would be covered through insurance carriers, other challenges remain today, which result in the District picking up costs for services that are still not covered by insurance. These challenges include:

- **Therapist credentials** – Credentialing has a significant impact on what is covered by insurance. In instances when a therapist does not have the necessary credentials to bill for insurance, those services are still being provided but at cost to the District.
- **Staff turnover** – Like many sectors, it is difficult to keep therapists. Staffing shortages, credentialing, and turnover create a cyclical challenge that ultimately result in a lack of services for students and families.

- ***Insurance plans that are not accepted by the Provider.*** In our case, our Provider does not accept Aetna insurance, and so any student with that insurance who receives services is paid by the District, even if Medical Access is a secondary insurance for the student.
- ***Staffing shortages*** – There are not enough therapists to meet the needs of all of our students. We currently have more students who would be referred if there were more therapists to meet the need. Likewise, there are not enough psychiatrists. While students may be receiving necessary therapy, they may not be seeing anyone for medication management.

In addition to these services, we felt it was important to provide some perspective on other resources designed to assist schools in addressing student mental health concerns. As some of you may be aware, West Shore School District is a two-county district, situated in Northern York County and Eastern Cumberland County. While both counties have Child and Adolescent Social Service Programs (CASSP), the model operates differently in each county. There are pros and cons to both, such as the level of support available to school personnel, i.e., individual vs. a team-based approach, in supporting students and families. Support from an individual caseworker at the county agency generally puts the burden back on school personnel to implement, while a team-based approach means traveling to the county office for meetings, which generally limits who can attend. In other words, time and distance prohibit families and other school personnel from being able to attend meetings.

In addition to this brief summary, we have included a link to a short video, which was created for a Legislative Breakfast hosted by the Capital Area Intermediate Unit in early March 2020. The Mental Health Matters video is approximately three and one-half minutes in length and can be accessed [here](#).

We realize this is a very quick snapshot of the issues we face in addressing student mental health needs. We look forward to responding to any questions you may have and to providing any additional details you may desire.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd B. Stoltz and Amy L. Gross