

PRESS RELEASE

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New Partnership Provides Free Telehealth Services for Students *Thera-Link application uses innovative, secure technology to provide access to care*

Kansas City, September 10, 2020: Diversity Telehealth LLC and Kansas City Public Schools are working together to provide remote access to behavioral and mental health services for students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

KCPS students and families can now use the Thera-Link® application free of charge. This HIPAA-compliant platform gives users access to wellness checks and social-emotional support and services by secure video and at their convenience.

The application can be used on a PC, Mac, Android, iPhone, or iPad. KCPS and Diversity Telehealth partnered to make this new technology available for KCPS students and families as the school district begins distance and virtual learning.

“Our number one priority is to develop well-rounded students in a safe learning environment, even during an international pandemic and social unrest in our country,” KCPS Executive Director of Student Support Services Lateshia Woodley said.

In alignment with the school system’s strategic plan, KCPS has made a significant investment in personnel, technology and training to meet the social-emotional needs of students and families. The pandemic and other issues make these services even more important, according to Dr. Woodley.

“As adults, our children look to us for all of the answers, especially at this time when we’re all dealing with some level of stress and anxiety,” Dr. Woodley said. “When you are in a distance situation, you are not able to look into the eyes of a child and see their needs and see something they may not be able to say to you, but this service is allowing students and families to address mental and behavioral health concerns head-on, whenever and wherever it’s needed.”

As part of the rollout of Thera-Link, KCPS school counselors will contact each family for a whole child wellness check-in. Students and family members will be referred to the Trauma-Sensitive School Clinicians in each school based on their wellness needs. The clinicians will walk the students and families through the process of signing-up to access and use Thera-Link. The clinicians can also be reached directly with hotline numbers assigned to each school. Those numbers are available at www.KCPublicSchools.org/WellnessHotline.

The valuable addition of Thera-Link to an already impressive array of social-emotional supports and services in KCPS is made possible thanks to COVID-19 response funding from the Jackson County Childrens Fund and a \$2.9 million federal grant garnered for the school system by Dr. Woodley and her team in November 2019.



The federal grant is being used to help the district meet its goals under the strategic plan by amplifying and expanding the Trauma-Informed School System Model. The trauma-informed model involves having staff who are trained and equipped to recognize the impact of trauma on students and family members, and then provide the support and resources to address their physical, mental and emotional health and wellness.

KCPS has increased the number of Trauma-Sensitive Clinicians based in schools across the system. These professionals serve as coaches for students, family members, teachers, support staff and school administrators.

The goal is to train every KCPS teacher in a number of trauma-informed interventions that have been proven to be effective. These strategies include conflict resolution, de-escalation and mediation. In addition, staff will be taught how to recognize and treat secondary trauma they experience during their work. Woodley and her team will also equip students to help themselves deal with the impact of trauma.

The KCPS Department of Student Support Services amplified its efforts once the pandemic crisis reached the Kansas City region. Dr. Woodley's team helped 4,583 students and family members between April 1 and June 30. That included support around crisis response, housing, criminal justice and immigration.

In addition to helping KCPS address the social-emotional support needs of students and families, the partnership with Diversity Telehealth will also help improve overall community health and make the healthcare system more effective. On average, 25 percent of medical appointments end up as no-shows. The coronavirus pandemic has only worsened that rate, according to Dr. Cooper.

"There are a lot of local and national mandates around in-person interactions, particularly in the healthcare industry, which causes a backlog in appointments," Dr. Shelley Cooper, founder of Diversity Telehealth, LLC, said. "Lack of access to care has a profound impact on delivering care to their patients. This program circumvents that problem by allowing licensed behavioral healthcare professionals to maintain scheduled appointments with KCPS students and families."

For more information on Thera-Link and the Diversity Telehealth partnership with KCPS, visit www.diversitytelehealth.com or call (913) 710-3818. Visit www.KCPublicSchools.org/Families for links to more information about programs and services to support KCPS families.

About Diversity Telehealth, LLC

Diversity Telehealth is a telecommunications technologies company that works to deliver, support, promote, and enhance long-distance clinical health care and health education.

About Thera-Link®

HIPAA-compliant online platform for mental health providers that offers private practitioners and small to medium group practices with an online practice management solution and connect with clients.