

September 22, 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians:

This letter is being sent to the parents/guardians of all middle and high school students in Helena Public Schools.

Helena Public Schools believe that mental wellness is critical to the academic success of students. Some children go through temporary periods of stress, sadness or anxiety due to multiple factors, such as the loss of a family member, a relationship breakup, or changing to a new school. For other students, these periods of stress, sadness or anxiety can be more than just situational, and can be a sign your child is struggling. As a result, we have partnered with Intermountain to make free, voluntary, behavioral health and wellness Screenings available to our middle and high school students through the School Based Outpatient Therapy (SBOT) services of Intermountain.

Helena Public Schools is proud to be working with Intermountain to help safeguard the health and welfare of our students, and we hope that you will take advantage of this confidential service for your child. Although your child may or may not have participated in past years, we remind you that a child's mental health can change within the course of a year, and an annual mental wellness and substance use screening may be beneficial. Please read the information below, and if you would like your child to participate, fill out, sign and return the Parent Consent Form to the address on the form.

Here is how the program works. Intermountain is in charge of the behavioral health and wellness screening process. Your child will not be screened without your signed permission. If signed permission is given, screening will take place during school hours in a private setting at the student's school. Below are three steps to the screening process:

**Step One:** Students will meet one-on-one with the School Based Outpatient Therapist (SBOT). This can happen in person or via a remote platform. During this meeting, the therapist will interview the student about general signs and behaviors exhibited by students who could be struggling. Questions include topics on thoughts of self-harm or suicide, signs of emotional distress, and incidents of substance use. Screenings will occur between now and the end of this school year. If you feel your son or daughter would benefit from more immediate support, please contact your school counselor.

**Step Two:** If your child's screening indicates a potential mental health or substance use issue, or if he or she asks for help, the School Based Outpatient Therapist (SBOT) will initially evaluate for immediate risk of self-harm, and will contact you to make a plan to meet your child's needs.

**Step Three:** You will be notified by the School Based Outpatient Therapist (SBOT) of the results. If everything appears to be within normal response for your child, you will be sent a letter indicating such, to the address you provided on the permission form. If your child has a follow-up meeting with the SBOT for further evaluation, the SBOT will contact you about the overall results, and discuss ways of providing your child with the help needed.

Again, this behavioral health and wellness screening is provided at no cost to you, but this does not provide follow-up evaluation and treatment services. It is up to you to decide if you want to obtain any additional services for your child. The School Based Outpatient Therapist (SBOT) will provide you with information about therapists in the community who serve adolescents and/or therapy services that are available at your child's school. At your request, a referral can be coordinated. Also, you may request that follow-up services be provided by the SBOT.

We also want to share with you the website, "[www.HelenaYouthCrisis.org](http://www.HelenaYouthCrisis.org)" that was developed in 2015. The website provides a roadmap for helping youth in crisis. When your youth or family is in crisis it is difficult to know what to do or who to call for help. Getting the help you need can be confusing and exhausting. The website is a simple guide for navigating through crisis situations, and the community services that may help.

Please do not hesitate to call the Curriculum and Instructional Services Administrator for Helena Public Schools, Joslyn Davidson, at 324-2037, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tyler Ream Superintendent