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Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling in Public Schools
Early Childhood Intervention programs

Background:

The First Annual Opioid Summit was held in September of 2013. During the course if the Summit healthcare, law enforcement and educational experts from around the state presented best practices and industry standards in an effort to aid Bernalillo County's efforts to curb Opioid abuse. During the education portion of the Summit APS representatives divulged to the group that early childhood (9-18 yrs.) prevention and treatment efforts were dangerously understaffed in schools in the metro area to the tune of six (6) substance/mental health counselors per 100,000 students.

Strategy:

The intention behind the additional counselors is part and parcel of a philosophical approach to mental health and substance abuse. It's noted that early intervention/prevention is not only a crucial tool to combat "self-medication" as these children enter adulthood but these counseling programs are fiscally more responsible than related costs and burdens to our criminal justice system.   The tragically low ratio of counselor to student could be rectified if the County were to be successful in getting an appropriation from the legislature which would either feed through the County or go directly to the school district (s). A more streamline approach to the understaffing issue would possibly be to work with HSD and their current MCO's contracts. The idea would be to amend the current contracts to allow/instruct the current MCO's to add additional (7) counselors to the school district by utilizing federal dollars.

Action:

The discussions regarding funding and application have remained quite fluid and currently we are looking at both a line item request in HB 2, the aforementioned HSD contract amendment and a possible partnership with UNMH.