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San Joaquin County to Receive \$6 Million for School-Based Mental Health Services

State grant brings substance abuse screening, suicide prevention programs, peer-to-peer mentoring, and other behavioral health services to 144,000 students in schools across San Joaquin County

March 3, 2022 (Stockton, CA) – San Joaquin County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) and the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) will receive a \$6 million grant over four years from the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission’s Mental Health Student Services Act.

“The BHS partnership with SJCOE is part of our countywide suicide prevention and education strategy and will greatly improve student access to mental health services, particularly for vulnerable children and youth, thus enabling them to develop into healthy, resilient adults,” said Tony Vartan, BHS Director. “The use of drugs during childhood and adolescence has greater potential to disrupt brain function in areas critical to motivation, memory, learning, judgement, mood, and behavior control. Prevention and early intervention of underage alcohol and other substance use can prevent devastating impacts on child development, mental health, and the development of coping skills.”

The joint grant application was a partnership with BHS, the SJCOE, and 13 school districts in the county.

“The importance of providing mental health services to students has never been more clear. The additional services this grant brings to our county will help school districts and SJCOE schools better support our students and families who have experienced trauma in recent years,” said Dr. Troy Brown, San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools. “With added counseling services and training opportunities for staff, this grant will sustain mental health services for students and have a lasting impact in our schools.”

Over four years, areas supported by the grant include:

- Screening students in grades 6-12 for substance use disorder and referral for counseling, if necessary.
- Suicide prevention programs for students in grades K-8, including peer-to-peer mentoring summits to help teach students how to support one another.
- Professional learning opportunities to train school staff.
- Parent Project classes to help families learn positive parenting practices.

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The mission of **San Joaquin County Behavioral Health Services** is to partner with the community to provide integrated, culturally and linguistically competent mental health and substance abuse services to meet the prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery needs of San Joaquin County residents.

The **San Joaquin County Office of Education** provides educational leadership, resources, and services to support schools throughout the county. With its highly regarded programs, innovative staff, and community partnerships, SJCOE ensures that every student in San Joaquin County has the opportunity of a quality education. For more information, visit www.sjcoe.org.