

Ms. Mary Blanco, Board Member

SUBJECT: EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS OF PILOT COMPREHENSIVE TELEHEALTH SERVICES AND EXAMINE FEASIBILITY OF EXPANDING DISTRICT-WIDE

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring the well-being of students has been a top priority for Miami Dade County Public Schools. Research has shown that the health of students, both physical and mental, is linked to academic achievement. The impact of health is linked to an increase in academic performance, attendance, behavior in school, and cognitive skills such as concentration and memory. As a result, schools, health agencies, parents and the community should work collaboratively to ensure that every student receives health services.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, some schools had nurses available on campus through community partnerships as well as those funded for ESE students. With the return to school after the pandemic, ESSER funds were used to provide health services at every school in the form of LPNs, RNs, EMTs, and Health Techs. As ESSER funds have been discontinued, we have continued to collaborate with community partners to have some form of nursing support in our schools.

In 2019, several counties in the state of Florida announced the installation of telehealth portals to provide mental health services to students. At the October 2019 Board Meeting, Board Member Rojas preferred item H-5 Telehealth Counseling. This item authorized the Superintendent of Schools to explore the feasibility of developing and implementing a telehealth counseling pilot program. With the pandemic occurring shortly after, the district shifted its model to include virtual/telehealth counseling services and support in addition to telephonic services. Since the return to school, students are currently provided with an array of mental health services and telehealth continues to be one of those services.

In 2022, a pilot program was implemented in 19 schools across the district to provide telehealth services both for physical and mental health concerns. One advantage of this service is that parents have access to these services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These services directly decrease student absenteeism, mental health impediments, disciplinary actions and employment disruption for working parents when their child is sick. In addition, a preliminary review of that data shows that in July 2023 to June 2024, there has been an average of 3 classroom hours saved for every telehealth visit. Given the benefits and use of services beyond school hours, the feasibility of implementing this service district-wide should be examined.

This board item seeks to request that the Superintendent of Schools explore the feasibility of providing telehealth services district wide to all students.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. MARY BLANCO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, request that the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. Review and analyze the effectiveness of the pilot program providing telehealth services.
2. Explore the feasibility of expanding these services across the district.
3. Provide an update at the Personnel, Student, School, & Community Support meeting on December 4, 2024.