

Proponent Testimony of Heather Snapp

Before the House Health and Human Services Committee

March 4, 2025

Dear Chair Carpenter and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Heather Snapp. I am a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker and the Regional Supervisor Children First CEO Kansas Inc. We have a partnership to provide 11 Mental Health Professionals to the 15 non-public schools in Central and Eastern Kansas for the Catholic Dioceses of Wichita.

The key points that I wish to share with you today are:

- The MHIT funding is providing a full-time Mental Health Professional into schools who are the only mental health professionals there. In other words, there are no other staff of case managers, social workers, psychologists, or others. Without this funding, these schools will lose all mental health services for low-resourced students who cannot afford or will not receive this type of support any other way.
- Each professional is providing services in line with their license, which includes group sessions, classroom presentations about mental health topics, and many times includes individual therapy sessions, all of which is removing barriers to quality mental health services.
- While telehealth is a great strategy for adults, we have found it ineffective for children. Plus, in our schools, there are no layers of administrative staff to collect a child from the classroom, to set them up in front of a computer for this type of therapy. It doesn't address the immediate crisis of the moment. Again, in non-public schools, there is no other layer of mental health professionals.
- MHIT funds allowed Children 1st to continue mental health services in Wichita when the COVID-19 fund ended, which has been a blessing to 541 students; but just as important, the MHIT funds started mental health services in seven rural schools for the first time in the history of those schools. Meaningful!
- In June, we will pilot a mental health focused one week summer camp for foster care students who are in middle school with a goal to increase self-esteem and resilience.
- Let's talk numbers. Since November, when the program started:
 - 137 Classrooms received presentations to promote mental health education.
 - 36 Group sessions have been facilitated
 - 41 students receive on-going, in-person counseling or therapy
 - 23 students were provided crisis intervention
 - 1 school received emergency in-person assistance from our Mental Health Crisis team when a death occurred in the school.

Let me tell you an impact story of mental health success when a parent wrote, "Over the winter break, my oldest son was killed in a car accident. Having a Mental Health Professional at the school to work with my youngest son has been the greatest asset I could ask for during this difficult time. The Mental Health Professional has aided him in processing his grief when it pops up at unexpected times during the school day. She has also been communicating with me about how my son is doing and given me tips to help him work through his grief. I am not sure what his school day would be like if he did not have this service at school."

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. For all children, I ask you to continue the MHIT funding for non-public schools, so that all students can learn and grow to be successful Kansans, even in rural Kansas.