



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PLANOUP TO CONTINUE ASSISTING YOUTH AT RISK OF DEPRESSION THANKS TO TEXAS HEALTH RESOURCES GRANT

PLANO, TX, June 24, 2021 – PlanoUp, a program that is proactively helping youth who may be at risk for depression and anxiety by bringing together services from five Collin County organizations, has received a two-year extension thanks to a \$474,198 community impact grant from Texas Health Resources. The grant will be managed by the Plano ISD Education Foundation.

“We are so grateful that this grant was in place at the onset of COVID,” stated Plano ISD Superintendent Sara Bonser. “The funding from Texas Health and the work by the five collaborating agencies helped and continues to help families at a time of truly unprecedented needs.”

Currently in three Plano ISD schools (Armstrong Middle School, Bowman Middle School and Williams High School), this initiative was launched in 2019 as one of several community impact grants awarded by Texas Health. The program uses an upstream approach to address the origins of factors that can lead to depression, such as food insecurity, access to transportation, housing needs or other necessities.

“The power of this collaboration is that oftentimes it’s not just one singular factor at the root cause of the challenges a family faces,” stated Megan Sieling, PlanoUP Program Manager. “The distinct services offered by agencies working together create a more powerful resource than all of us working in silos with families having to reach multiple sources. For a struggling family that might be difficult, unaffordable or hard to navigate.”

The five organizations—Plano ISD Education Foundation (lead partner), Assistance Center of Collin County, LifePath Systems, Minnie’s Food Pantry and UT Southwestern Medical Center’s (UTSW) Center for Depressive and Clinical Care—work closely with the PlanoUp schools to provide parent-consented student screening for depression and anxiety, counseling, life skills training, mobile food pantry distributions, assistance with SNAP applications and information about local food programs/services. PlanoUp also provides financial assistance to the families of enrolled students on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, UTSW facilitates the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) program to promoting increased discussion and knowledge about mental health, suicide prevention, problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence.

To date, PlanoUP has:

- Screened 185 students for possible depression and anxiety
- Connected 110 students to resources (counseling, life skills training) to promote their mental health
- Organized 29 food distribution events
- Trained 70 teachers and staff regarding mental health first aid to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in youth
- Referred 68 families to available resources for assistance with food, rent or utility expenses

With the two-year grant extension, the initiative will add a more universal approach and will screen for anxiety in addition to depression. The program will also start monitoring the impact the program has on academic success.

“PlanoUP is an exciting approach to addressing the multiple challenges that are facing many of our teens today,” stated Dr. Jennifer Hughes, head of the Risk and Resilience Network in the UT Southwestern Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care. “By having a rich network of agencies that are already working together, we can screen for depression and anxiety to connect students to the care they need more quickly, as well as ensure that other stressors families might be facing, such as housing, transportation and food insecurity, are being addressed. This is a whole community system addressing the whole family’s needs.”

The PlanoUp grant will expire in 2022. “We would like to expand the program to include more schools and make it self sustainable when the grant ends,” said Seiling. “We welcome any agencies who would like to join with us in contributing to this effort through financial or in-kind support.”

About Plano Independent School District

The Plano Independent School District (Plano ISD) (www.pisd.edu) endeavors to foster the highest level of student learning. Plano ISD is located 20 miles north of Dallas, Texas and serves the residents of approximately 100 square miles in southwest Collin County, including 66 square miles in the city of Plano, northern portions of the cities of Dallas and Richardson and parts of the cities of Allen, Parker and Murphy. Plano ISD employs more than 7,000 staff members who serve more than 50,000 students in 72 schools and 11 service facilities. Mission: Our Plano ISD learning community will educate, inspire and empower every student to activate their unique potential in a dynamic world.

About the Plano ISD Education Foundation

The Plano ISD Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to help all students in the Plano Independent School District achieve their full potential by providing financial support to educators and academic programs.

Since 1993, the Foundation has generated over \$20 million in private support for priority projects for which tax dollars are not available. The Foundation's commitment to support quality education for Plano ISD students remains strong. We continue to identify and fund needed programs and work to increase community and corporate involvement in support of our schools. We currently partner with 40+ businesses and organizations in the North Texas region.

The Board of Directors consists of business and community leaders who recognize the importance of excellent public schools to the Plano community. Support generated by the Plano ISD Education Foundation ensures Plano ISD remains one of the best public school districts in the nation.

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