

News

School Board

CONTINUED FROM 1

state polices that would establish comprehensive school and community mental health systems. The system would offer preventative and treatment services to increase access to in-school and telehealth services, increase access to mental health professionals via in-person or telehealth visits, improve awareness and understanding of child emotional and mental health needs through ongoing teacher, administrator and support staff training, integrate suicide prevention and coping skills into existing curriculum,

support the mental health needs of educators and staff, provide a comprehensive mental health resources clearing house for school and community provides, expand training that includes a referral plan for continuing action provided by mental health professionals outside of the school district, designate a categorical funding stream for mental health professionals serving students and ongoing teacher, administrator and support staff mental health training and support development of a mental health workforce to provide service to children

SAFETY

“Every student and staff member should have a safe and secure

environment in which to learn and work.” State polices supported for safety are expanding resources and evidence-based training for staff and adults working with students to address behavioral issues, provide early identification, intervention and school violence prevention programs, enhance flexibility for schools to work with parents, the community, law enforcement and emergency personnel to institute safety measures in and around schools, provide evidence-based school safety training to students and staff and allow maximum flexibility and equitable distribution of resources to meet student, staff and building safety needs.

Veterans

CONTINUED FROM 1

week-and-a-half out,” Wilson said. “I do not schedule more than four, (one-) hour appointments in a day.”

Which Wilson said is because she does not know how many walk-ins to expect. The fourth quarter report shows walk-ins outnumber scheduled visits and home visits. Of the 328 total visits, about 201, or more than 61 percent, were walk-ins. One month in the fourth quarter saw as much as 81 walk-ins.

It’s a lot, she said, especially when she has four appointments in a day and potentially three to six walk-ins — or more — to handle with Thorpe.

“Now I have no time for my case development stuff and responding when there are subsequent development letters to keep those cases going,” she said. “The reason why my cases have been so successful is because I’ve been able to do the work to keep those things going for the veteran.”

Wilson complimented her veterans for being more than willing to do everything they can to help out. But she’s only one person and she has not got “enough time in the day.” Cupples asked if Marion County has a succession plan. Wilson said a new hire is in the works, but there is still training to go through.

“Poweshiek (County) is part-time so we do oc-

asionally have some of the Poweshiek veterans,” Wilson said. “. . . I hate having to turn a veteran away when they need assistance, but you’re going to have to call Poweshiek and leave a message.”

Jasper County Veteran Affairs currently has 307 open cases or claims. Cupples said he has spoken to Thorpe who has reiterated much of what Wilson reported.

Wilson said, “We were talking again this morning and he’s like, ‘My position needs to be moved to a full-time salaried position, so we can get somebody in here to get them trained.’ Mr. Thorpe is probably looking to retire. But we had a deal. He’s like, ‘I ain’t leaving yet until I know you’re taken care of.’”

Cupples responded, “Sounds like Keith.”

Thorpe is supposed to work 28 hours. But he has been working an average of 30 to 35 hours to keep up with the workload. Thorpe is getting paid overtime for those hours, too. On average, Thorpe earns about 10 to 15 hours of overtime every pay period.

“I am also working on average 10 to 20 hours of overtime each pay period, and our commission has instructed us to start keeping track of all of that on a spread sheet,” Wilson said.

Jasper County Supervisor Brandon Talsma thanked Wilson for keeping track of the data and said budget discussions will be beginning again soon.

Vacation

CONTINUED FROM 1

“Our highest employee would range around \$12,000 in payout,” Jennings said.

During work session discussions over the past two weeks, the Jasper County Board of Supervisors agreed paying out all of those employees — some of which have more than 400 to 500 hours of unused vacation time — is unacceptable. Super-

visor Denny Stevenson said he was adamantly against payouts.

If the updated policy is approved by supervisors in a future board meeting, employees would not be able to accrue any more vacation time once they hit the 280-hour cap. Those over the 280-hour mark will likely have two years to use their vacation. But supervisors may have to pay up to a certain amount.

Either way, the cap affects all employees in

the same way, whether they have worked for the county for 20 years or one year. Jasper County Supervisor Brandon Talsma said some payouts could be provided to employees with substantial accruals, but they would be limited in the amount of hours used for payouts.

“In situations where they’re over a certain threshold, whether they’re over 400 hours or 500 hours, maybe it’s a (scenario where) we want you to burn down

200 hours over the next two years and we’ll pay you out for the remainder to get you down to that 280 balance,” he said. “But we’re not going to pay you for all.”

Supervisors expect if the policy is updated and approved that department heads will have to encourage their workers to take more down time, which Jasper County Human Resources Director Dennis Simon said is something the county is very much in favor of.

Soil and Water

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to do “all the behind the scenes stuff” related to the project.

As an outdoorsman and a person with a farming background, Talsma said there are big benefits to these types of projects. Regardless of the cause of nitrogen runoff and whether soil erosion is perceived to be “a minor or major program,” he said anything lo-

wans can do to decrease them is a good thing.

“It shouldn’t matter where you stand on the subject,” he said of soil and water quality issues, which he noted are controversial topics in Iowa. “We’re supposed to be good stewards of the land. Our livelihood depends on the land. So why wouldn’t we want to do everything we can to take better care of the land?”

In a past meeting, Matt McDonald, water quality initiative proj-

ects coordinator at IDALS, said bioreactors and saturated buffers act like a kidney. Whenever a field is tilled and drains into a waterway or ditch, the bioreactors and saturated buffers intercept that and filter the water before it is released.

IDALS has completed similar projects in Boone, Dallas, Polk and Story Counties.

Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District can be contacted at 641-792-4116.

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