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NEWS RELEASE

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School District Awarded ~\$2 Million Grant for Youth Wellness and Resilience

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA - The Houston County School District has been awarded a grant valued at approximately \$2 million over five years, to promote the mental health and well-being of students and prevent youth violence. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) chose the district as one of three in the state to be awarded Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education).

Grant funds may be used to increase the awareness of mental health issues among students; provide training for adults who interact with the youth to detect and respond to mental health issues; and to connect students who have behavioral health issues with needed services.

The Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Dr. Zabrina Cannady, commented, “The emotional well-being of our students is of primary concern at all times, but now more than ever due to the global pandemic that is impacting all aspects of life. Receiving the Project AWARE grant will give us access to resources aligned with our goal of supporting the whole child through a multi-tiered system of support, which promotes academic, behavioral, and social emotional learning.

GaDOE applied for Project AWARE funds through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Mental Health Services. The program focuses on partnerships and collaboration between state and local school districts to promote the healthy development of school-aged youth and prevent youth violence. Goals for Project AWARE follow.

1. Increase participation of the community (including families and youth) and mental health providers (including school-based and community-based providers) in efforts to identify the mental health resources available to meet the needs of the students and families in each LEA.
2. Increase awareness and identification of mental health and behavior concerns, and student and family access to mental health providers through the PBIS framework in Georgia Project AWARE schools.
3. Increase the percentage of Georgia youth and families receiving needed mental health services through collaboration between LEAs and community mental health providers.
4. Train educators, first responders, and parents to respond to mental health needs of youth.

Each of the three school districts chosen by GaDOE is anticipated to receive from \$1,800,000 per year. For more information about the Project AWARE Grant, please contact Dr. Cannady at Zabrina.Cannady@hcbe.net or visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-20-016>.

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