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South Dakota receives grant to support mental health services in schools

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Education has been awarded an \$8.7 million Project AWARE grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The grant is a partnership with the Department of Social Services. Over a period of five years, the grant will be used to help raise awareness and fund a tiered support system of evidence-based training and individualized services for school-aged students and school communities in need of mental health supports.

A key component of the grant is to connect school professionals with Community Mental Health Center professionals to reach more school-aged youth who need behavior and mental health services.

“We know that the need for these kinds of services is there in our schools. We’ve been hearing growing concerns from school officials,” said Mary Stadick Smith, interim secretary of education. “This grant will help us to address some of the current gaps in service and better connect students and families with mental health resources.”

The first cohort of school districts will begin receiving behavior and mental health supports through the grant beginning in October 2018. More schools will have the opportunity to receive supports through the grant in subsequent years.

Partners including the Children’s Home Society, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI South Dakota) and the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment at the University of South Dakota will help deliver evidence-based training for schools and communities.