

New Behavioral Technician Health High School Curriculum Launching Pathway to Profession

The State Board of Education has announced the new Behavioral Health Technician Program, a first-of-its-kind secondary curriculum created and designed by the School District of Palm Beach County. The program helps prepare high school students for employment immediately after graduation and set them on a path to lifelong careers.

Long-term, the program aims to create a diverse and inclusive workforce and address the critical behavioral health professional shortage. According to data from Kaiser Family Foundation, Florida's Health Professional Shortage Areas meet only 19% of the state's mental health needs.

The Behavioral Health-Focused School Project Team that came together to develop the program was led by BeWellPBC and the School District of Palm Beach County's Choice and Career Options and Behavioral and Mental Health Departments, and included Palm Beach County Youth Services Department, Career Source Palm Beach County, United Way of Palm Beach County, and several other partners.

The state-approved course is designed for high school medical students where juniors and seniors can choose to take the specialized curriculum once they have completed their general medical prerequisites.

Palm Beach County Youth Services Department has already agreed to accept Behavioral Health Technician interns. "Hosting interns allows for the development of a needed workforce pipeline and creates career readiness for our youth," said Tammy Fields, Director of Palm Beach County Youth Services.

While the curriculum is available to all districts across the state, the School District of Palm Beach County estimates the program could benefit up to 6,000 students in 20 high school medical academy programs when it is launched in August 2022. Beyond local impact on the workforce in the near future, the program provides a path to university programs for advanced degrees, helping to overcome industry shortages for higher level positions.