



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 18, 2023

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Fontana Unified Receives Federal and State Grants to Provide Districtwide Mental Wellness Training

FONTANA, CA – Recognizing a need to increase mental health awareness throughout the school district and community, Fontana Unified will begin a comprehensive mental health and wellness training initiative after being awarded a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services worth more than \$400,000.

The SAMSHA grant, which will be split over four years, will go to the District’s Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) department to fund specialized training in detecting the signs of mental illness so that District staff can respond in a timely manner to avert a mental health crisis. Training will also be provided to the community so that families can better identify early warning signs of mental illness.

Fontana Unified is one of just two California school districts to receive a SAMSHA grant in 2022. The grant will be supplemented by a California Department of Education Antibias Education grant worth nearly \$200,000. The grants further bolster the District commitment to mental wellness, which includes the hiring of three additional full-time District social emotional support specialists and seven mental health therapists in the last year.

“We are very excited to start the mental health awareness training, which we have been developing for the last two years,” FUSD Social Emotional Support Specialist Liz Romanio said. “MTSS recognizes that school districts can be hubs of support for students, and serve to facilitate a mental health collaborative. But first we need to eliminate the stigma of reporting mental illness, train people to understand what mental illness looks like, so we can respond and get students the help they need when they need it.”

The District will implement two evidence-based training courses, the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) program and the PREPaRE program. The training will be divided into three separate groups, with each group trained by MTSS staff, supported by District partners Care Solace and South Coast Community Services, incrementally over the course of four years. The training is tentatively scheduled to begin in the fall of 2023.

YMHFA is designed for adults who regularly interact with young people, and focuses on teaching support groups how to help students in crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered will include anxiety, depression, substance use, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), trauma, the impact of social media and bullying, and eating disorders.

Fontana Unified teachers and classified staff – which include front office staff, classroom aides, afterschool program staff, bus drivers and others who have direct daily contact with students when

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school is in session – will comprise one group undergoing YMHFA training, with a goal of training just over 450 teachers and staff a year for four years.

A separate group of District parents and caregivers will participate in a series of in-person bilingual monthly training YMHFA workshops, with a goal of training 60 to 120 participants a year for four years. The District’s Family and Community Engagement department will work to advertise the workshops throughout the community and provide referrals to those who wish to attend the workshops.

District mental health professionals, administrators and educators will be trained in the PREPaRE program, which will train participants on how to best fill the roles and responsibilities generated by a school-wide crisis, with a goal of training 35 participants a year for four years. PREPaRE, which is administered by the National Association of School Psychologists, is the only national training curriculum developed by educators for educators.

The SAMSHA and Antibias Education grants will go toward hiring substitutes to allow teachers to attend a one-day training session, travel, lodging, consulting services and operating expenditures.

The grants were written by Fontana Unified’s Director of Grants and Funding Development Errol Glenn, who prepared a four-year budget analysis and worked with Romanio on a proposal that provided a detailed framework of the training program.

“Fontana Unified is thrilled to be supported by both the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and the state of California to bring our vision of a districtwide mental health and awareness training program out of the planning stages and into the schools,” Interim Superintendent Juan M. López said. “Thank you to our Student Services and Fiscal Services departments for their stellar work in ensuring this vital program is fully funded and ready to implement.”

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