

Scotland County: Finding Creative Ways to Expand Access to Care



Scotland School District convening attendees in Laurinburg, NC on April 20, 2023.

I2i's Scotland Convening brought the school district's behavioral health team together with the county's mental health support network of community groups, providers, insurance organizations, and NC DHHS to discuss how to more effectively meet students' growing mental health needs.

Scotland Schools face many of the same challenges as other rural counties in getting their students quality mental healthcare access:

- **Limited providers.** Scotland's mental health provider base is small, especially for kids with complex needs or families in need of therapy. Many mental health assessments are completed via telehealth, which is less effective for younger patients.
- **Mental health stigma.** School-based counselors can see students twice before requiring parental consent to continue their care. Almost 50% don't provide consent.

Even if a parent consents to continue treatment for their child or family, most find it difficult to coordinate and receive treatment outside of Scotland County further from their home.

Making things more difficult, as the COVID health emergency expires, many families may lose their Medicaid coverage until North Carolina's pending expansion of Medicaid takes effect.

The end result: These barriers prevent too many kids from receiving the care they need.

Scotland Action Plan

Over the course of our 90-minute conversation, the organizations comprising Scotland's mental health support network developed ideas for an action plan that focused on using the county's existing resources more effectively to address these challenges:

- 1. Connect school district counselors to Family Partners.** Family Partners are local residents who have successfully accessed mental healthcare for themselves or their children. These family peers are better able to build connections with other families and help them make decisions about their care, whether it's deciding to grant school counselors permission to continue evaluating their child or coordinating care outside of school. These Partners are coordinated by Scotland's existing System of Care Collaborative.
- 2. Explore the process for allowing school counselors to bill for services through Medicaid.** Some Scotland students are Medicaid beneficiaries. Establishing a process to allow school counselors, who maintain the same credentials as mental health counselors in private practice, to deliver more services for Medicaid beneficiaries will make receiving care more convenient and offset Scotland's small provider base. The i2i team will be connected school district leadership with Wake County Government representatives, who set up this system for counselors in their county's school district.
- 3. Utilize trusted sources to battle stigma.** i2i and the organizations in attendance will work together to distribute information to community members that de-stigmatizes mental health challenges and the care kids need to heal. Local churches will also be asked to distribute these messages.

[The Laurinburg Exchange covered our meeting.](#)

Convening Participants

Thank you to all of Scotland County's community and behavioral health leaders who joined i2i and the Scotland County School District team for our convening and who will lead the execution of our action plan:

- [AmeriHealth Caritas](#)
- [Carolina Complete Health](#)
- [Eastpointe](#)
- [Mental Health Transformation Alliance](#)
- [Monarch](#)
- [NC DHHS, Division of Child and Family Well-Being](#)
- [NC Families United](#)
- [NC Youth and Family Voices Amplified](#)
- [United Healthcare](#)
- [WellCare of North Carolina](#)

