

Martin County: Meeting Kids and Families Where They Are



Martin County Schools convening attendees in Williamston, NC, on May 18, 2023.

Martin County Schools (MCS) is developing a strategy to help address a growing concern: Post-COVID, more elementary school children are struggling with their mental health.

Those who are just starting school are overwhelmed after having spent years isolating. Kids who were in school before COVID are finding it difficult to reorient themselves to the school day's demands. Because they don't have the coping skills that typically develop with age, these struggles create mental health challenges that require specialized care.

Accessing this care in Martin County is difficult given the larger demand and small base of providers.

Martin County Action Plan

Over the course of our 90-minute conversation, we worked with the MCS team to develop an action plan designed to help younger children and their families access the specialized care they need. Our plan delivers care and support in all the places kids and families are: at home, through their care provider, and at school:

- **At home.** MCS families have multiple sources of mental health support they can access from home, including:
 - **Child First.** The Child First Program is managed locally by Trillium Health Resources, the LME-MCO that coordinates behavioral health services for Medicaid beneficiaries. This program dispatches a team of mental health professionals to a home to help both the child and their family understand their mental health challenges, deliver age-appropriate care, strengthen the caregiver-child bond, and help build coping skills.

- **Family Partners.** Family Partners are local residents who have successfully guided their children through the process of accessing mental healthcare. These family peers are aware of available care resources and are better able to build connections with other families.
- **Through care providers.** The NC Psychiatry Access Line (NC-PAL) offers resources to providers that they can use to better identify their patients' mental health challenges and ensure they get referred to a mental health professional.

Medicaid beneficiaries also have access to care coordinators, who can help ensure children and their families understand why mental health is important, develop a care plan, make their appointments, and follow through with their treatment. These coordinators can also help them understand how they can access community resources.

- **At school.** NC-PAL also offers specialized behavioral health training for the staff at more schools each year. As the program continues, more Martin County schools can participate.

Many of the organizations that comprise the county's mental health support network belong to the local System of Care (SOC) Collaborative, which meets monthly. SOC leaders can help ensure that each participating organization is providing the MCS team with the resources it needs to better serve its younger students.

Convening Participants

Thank you to all of Martin County's community and behavioral health leaders who joined i2i and the MCS team for our convening:

- [Mental Health Transformation Alliance](#)
- [NC DHHS, Division of Child and Family Well-Being](#)
- [NC Psychiatry Access Line](#)
- [Trillium Health Resources](#)
- [United Healthcare](#)