

The Results Are In: United Way's Path For Students Benefits All, According To Analysis



United Way's PATH (Providing Access to Healing) for Students has its roots in the 2006 LIFE Study, a local community assessment published every

five years. The study identified access to mental health services as a critical issue in the Fox Cities after noting that twenty-five percent of 10th graders had experienced depression and fourteen percent reported that they had attempted suicide.

In response to this data, United Way created the PATH program in 2008 to offer school-based mental health therapy. After a three-year pilot in the Menasha Joint School District, the program has now expanded to serve over 600 students in ten school districts in the Fox Cities. Bringing the therapists to the schools has removed many of the barriers that prevented students from receiving care, including limited financial resources, parental work schedules and lack of transportation.

To better gauge the impact of United Way's PATH for Students on the community, a cost-benefit analysis was conducted in the fall of 2012 by the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. **For 155 youth treated in a single school year, the net benefits of PATH totaled \$7,472,000 or approximately \$49,000 per student.** For students, the benefits include avoided medical costs, increased productivity and lifetime earnings, decreased risk of suicide and increased quality of life. School districts experience decreased truancy and decreased behavioral and counseling expenditures. For the community, there are avoided costs to the criminal justice system. The results of the cost-benefit analysis confirms that United Way's PATH for Students is achieving positive net benefits and the recommendation from



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the La Follette School was to continue to expand United Way's PATH for Students in the community. As important as the study's results are, United Way also values feedback from the students. When one student commented, "I really think I want to live now," we knew that the PATH program is doing what we had hoped for – changing lives.