

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2024

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### **Chippewa Valley mental health coalition helps launch new Behavioral Health Strategy Guide to improve mental and behavioral health**

*Projects implemented in 10 Wisconsin communities are highlighted in a new tool that helps others set up similar initiatives*

[Eau Claire, Wis.] – The Mental Health Matters coalition, based in Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties, is helping to launch an online tool that includes strategies to tackle mental and behavioral health concerns in Wisconsin.

The set of strategies – compiled via a tool called the [Behavioral Health Strategy Guide](#) – includes detailed guides created by the 10 Wisconsin coalitions, which highlight the following:

- **School-based strategies**, like mindfulness training, school-based mental health counseling, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) workshops.
- **Community-based strategies**, like Mental Health First Aid training, a parenting program aimed at reducing alcohol and drug abuse within families, and a community-based early autism screening clinic.
- **Other resources communities can create**, like a website listing all local mental health resources and providers, and a tool to make local youth mental health data available to the public.

With the Strategy Guide, members of the public will be able to easily find the strategies each of the 10 coalitions used to bring community partners together to identify an issue of focus, steps each coalition took to address its region’s mental health challenges, and best practices and lessons learned. The guide is intended to be a resource for other mental health advocates to use and adapt to their own communities.

This project was a large, coordinated effort to understand the mental and behavioral health issues affecting communities. The coalitions that participated serve a diverse set of Wisconsin populations – rural, urban, suburban, and tribal.

The Mental Health Matters coalition worked alongside other coalitions in Wisconsin to create the Strategy Guide. The project, called the Advancing Behavioral Health Initiative (ABHI), was funded and guided by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment, which invested \$20 million dollars into 10 community organizations in Wisconsin over eight years.

“Our community coalition chose to focus on promoting youth resilience,” said **Project Director Brenda Scheurer**. “The Strategy Guide shares our victories in working with youth-serving professionals to improve youth mental health in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties. We hope other communities find this resource valuable to implement the same or similar strategies.”

The Mental Health Matters coalition began their work on the project in 2016 – forging partnerships among local school districts, healthcare organizations, law enforcement, public

health departments, and other community organizations to create a path forward to address the growing issue of mental health in Wisconsin. Since then, Mental Health Matters has implemented strategies to:

- Train and educate more than 2,000 youth-serving professionals across 94 organizations to address adverse childhood experiences and resiliency, and
- Reach over 100 staff members at local schools with their mindfulness program.

Visit [www.mcw.edu/strategy-guide](http://www.mcw.edu/strategy-guide) to view the Behavioral Health Strategy Guide.

“We’re proud of the work and the progress these community coalitions have made toward improving mental health and eliminating the stigma surrounding it,” said **AHW director Jesse Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH**. “At a time when mental health resources are stretched beyond capacity, the purpose of the Behavioral Health Strategy Guide is to ensure the coalitions’ lessons live on and the end results can be replicated elsewhere.”

“The goal from the start of this groundbreaking project was to create localized and, importantly, sustainable solutions to addressing mental health. The Behavioral Health Strategy Guide effectively outlines actionable ways to implement these tested programs in other Wisconsin communities – and beyond,” said **Ehrenfeld**.

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*Mental Health Matters, serving Chippewa and Eau Claire Counties, is one of 10 community coalitions funded under an eight-year grant from the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment. The coalition aims to improve local mental health outcomes via prevention and intervention methods.*

#### **About the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment**

*The Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment (AHW) is a statewide health philanthropy established by the Medical College of Wisconsin to steward a generous financial gift from Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin. Since 2004, AHW has invested over \$338 million in more than 600 health research, workforce development, and community health initiatives statewide. Learn more at [www.ahwendowment.org](http://www.ahwendowment.org).*