



PRESS RELEASE

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PWPSD, Saddle Hills County Partner for Additional Mental Health Support

Peace Wapiti Public School Division (PWPSD) is thrilled to partner with Saddle Hills County to provide additional mental health support to its most northern students. To increase access to mental health supports, Saddle Hills County Council has committed to providing funding in the amount of \$112,500.00 for an additional Outreach and Mental Health Professional.

The new hybrid position provides direct clinical support to students, while also leading mental health outreach, prevention, and education initiatives that are targeted for Saddle Hills County residents. The position will serve as a key connector between students, families, school staff, and community-based mental health resources.

PWPSD Mental Health Clinical Supervisor, Ashley Mercer, says the Outreach and Mental Health Professional will play an important role in early mental health intervention for Saddle Hills County students. "Mental health disorders impact over 20% of the population, and research has shown that early intervention is the best predictor of positive outcomes for students. Early intervention, assessment, diagnosis, and effective treatment is the only proven method for suicide prevention." As an outreach team member, the Outreach and Mental Health Professional will also provide support, resources, and help meet the needs of students and families beyond the school environment.

Saddle Hills County Reeve, Kristen Smith, says they are delighted to be able to partner with PWPSD on providing mental health supports to rural students and their families. "The lack of services and ability to access supports in rural areas has always been challenging. By partnering on this program, we hope to remove some of these barriers and provide crucial early intervention support tailored to each individual's needs." She adds the health and wellbeing of the children is paramount, and the County hopes that this step towards improved services will provide them with the skills they need to continue to move the community forward for generations to come.



PWPSD and Saddle Hills County are excited to work together to provide their residents with the incredible benefits of strengthened relationships, family and community wraparound supports, improved school attendance and positive parent involvement, reduced barriers and increased rural supports, and to ultimately assist in improving student wellbeing.

The Outreach and Mental Health Professional position will be implemented for the upcoming 2025-2026 school year.

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