

Jefferson County Educational Service Center

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**JCESC Celebrates First Year of OhioRISE**

STEUBENVILLE-It has been one year since OhioRISE began and the Jefferson County Educational Service Center marked the occasion with a celebration on July 21.

Representatives and supporters simultaneously gathered at the R. Larry George Professional Training Annex in Steubenville and the Canton office at the Key Bank Building for a luncheon to honor OhioRISE (Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence), a statewide initiative through Aetna Better Health that works to address children with complex behavioral health and multisystem needs. JCESC is one of 20 regional providers, or care management entities (CMEs), and covers an eight-county area known as Catchment J that includes Jefferson, Belmont, Harrison, Carroll, Columbiana, Tuscarawas, Monroe and Stark.

JCESC became involved with OhioRISE after looking to expand outreach services beyond grades K-12 and address issues schools face today. Officials said they noticed an increasing number of challenges surrounding mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities among students which ultimately could impact schools and families. Working with organizations such as the Family and Children First Council, Help Me Grow, Early Intervention and ENGAGE, as well as growing programs including alternative schools, Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) and Jefferson Health Plan, helped prepare for becoming a CME. When Gov. Mike DeWine announced that Aetna would oversee the program, JCESC leaders realized it would create access to knowledge and resources the service had to offer and would enable the regional CMEs to maintain local services for local children and families. Leaders determined that about 2,335 youth ultimately would be served throughout the region with an overall estimate of 60,000 kids statewide.

JCESC obtained a $1.1 million start-up grant to launch the initiative in July of 2022 and has since formed two offices on Lovers Lane in Wintersville and at 100 Central Avenue North in Canton. CME Program Director Linda Trushel said the sites employ 34 care coordinators, in addition to four supervisors plus herself and Assistant Director Lindsay Brandon.

“Right now, we’ve helped 453 children within the eight counties,” Trushel said. “A referral is made by a provider who feels a child has a mental or behavioral health need and we can complete a CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) assessment to determine eligibility for the program.”

The care coordinators then find sources to assist the child so they may be successful in the community. Trushel added that aid could range from health care to even pool passes or driving lessons. Community partners include children’s services agencies, county juvenile court systems, community mental health agencies, county Mental Health and Recovery Boards, county Boards of Developmental Disabilities, schools and food banks. She noted that the program has benefitted children and their families in myriad ways.

“The children have a person who is constantly in their lives to talk to, and it has also improved communication between the parents and children,” she said. “It also helps them with community supports and lets them continuously live with their parents. Anything is possible to support the family, and it supports them in ways that Medicaid or local providers can’t. It individualizes the needs of each family.”

Trushel said the process to establish OhioRISE was a major one and she was thrilled to see how far it has come over the past 12 months.

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“It has been quite a year and we are blessed to have this party,” she said, thanking everyone for their efforts. “A year ago, we stood here figuring out how we could help families, and in March of 2022 we worked on the program.”

Meanwhile, Brandon led festivities at the Canton location where she and staff members highlighted the occasion.

“It was a great opportunity for our staff to come together to celebrate one year of growth in this program. The staff enjoyed this time together discussing their successes and ways they can continue to grow as the program continues to progress,” she said.

JCESC CEO Dr. George Ash was pleased to not only see the initiative come to fruition, but also to watch it grow.

“I’m excited about what’s to come and am grateful to all of the community partners and supporters that are benefitting communities from Monroe to Stark counties,” he commented, reflecting on how he once worked with social services in the past. “It reminds me of helping with families and it made a difference in their lives. I think about the care coordinators and you are the most important to us and those families. What you’re doing is making such a huge difference.”

JCESC Superintendent Dr. Chuck Kokiko echoed those sentiments and said officials were working behind the scenes to make things better for coordinators.

“I do believe you are the face of the organization and the face of the families,” he said at the Steubenville gathering. “I know you have a tough job. It’s the ones you can reach that helps you keep going. There is a lot to celebrate and this is one way to do it.”

Dr. Kokiko also thanked the JCESC Governing Board for sponsoring the celebration and congratulated everyone involved in the initiative.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid indicated that OhioRISE was the state’s first highly integrated care program for youth with complex behavioral health and multi-system needs. The remaining CMEs provide community mental health and substance abuse, specialty care coordination, hospital and educational services. OhioRISE is available to youth under age 21 who are Medicaid-eligible. For more information on public and partnership opportunities, contact Dr. Kokiko at (740) 283-3347 or [ckokiko@jcesc.org](mailto:ckokiko@jcesc.org) and Trushel for children’s referrals to the program at [ltrushel@jcesc.org](mailto:ltrushel@jcesc.org) or (740) 792-4011, ext. 502. More information is also listed at [www.jcesc.org/CareManagementEntity](http://www.jcesc.org/CareManagementEntity). For general inquiries about OhioRISE, contact Jill Tayfel, CME relationship manager for Aetna, at [TayfelJ@aetna.com](mailto:TayfelJ@aetna.com). The 24-hour crisis hotline is also available at (740) 792-4012.

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**(Photo Cutline: The Jefferson County Educational Service Center marked the first anniversary of OhioRISE (Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence), a statewide initiative through Aetna Better Health that works to address children with complex behavioral health and multisystem needs. JCESC is one of 20 regional providers, or care management entities (CMEs), and covers an eight-county area known as Catchment J that spans from Monroe to Stark. Representatives and supporters were invited to a celebratory luncheon in Steubenville on July 21 to recognize the initiative that currently assists 458 children and their families.)**