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## **Bureau of Indian Education launches behavioral health call line for students and staff**

### *24/7 crisis support available at all BIE and Tribal schools*

**WASHINGTON** – The Bureau of Indian Education is increasing behavioral health and wellness support by launching a 24/7 support line for students and staff at schools and programs funded by the bureau. Students and staff who call 1-844-ASK-BHWP (1-844-275-2497) will be connected with trained professionals who can provide immediate individual attention. The call line offers 24/7 crisis support and scheduled counseling sessions.

The call line is part of the [BIE Behavioral Health and Wellness Program](#), which provides bureau-funded schools and programs with Indigenous focused, evidence-based and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness support. The Program’s counseling team is primarily staffed with Indigenous counselors who have experience serving Native communities.

“BIE schools play a critical role in student’s lives that extends beyond the classroom and into their communities and the Tribal nations that they are part of,” said **Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland**. “The mental health and wellness services provided through this program will also extend beyond the classroom, creating healthier and more resilient communities.”

Once connected to the call line, callers will have two options to select from for behavioral health support. Option 1 will connect callers to 24/7 immediate individual crisis support. This option is available now to students and staff at all schools and programs funded by BIE. Option 2 will connect callers with information on non-crisis virtual counseling services.

The program’s virtual counseling model utilizes a school-based, short-term and solution-focused approach to address student and staff behavioral health concerns. The program will align with the American School Counselor Association’s standards for school-based counseling which focuses on preventative and early intervention efforts.

The BIE program will also offer trauma-informed on-site and virtual crisis support to students and staff at bureau-funded schools and programs in 2024. Crisis support aims to lessen the

intensity, duration and presence of a crisis that is typically overwhelming, while showing respect and honor for local Tribes' practices and traditions.

“This program is designed to offer individual, culturally relevant crisis support, ensuring that both students and staff have access to the personalized assistance they need,” said **BIE Director Tony Dearman**. “Mental health is essential to success – in academics and in life. This program empowers our students and staff to thrive in the classroom while fostering the overall well-being of our entire community.”

Staff available for on-site crisis support services are trained in the use of trauma and evidence-based intervention models, which include psychological first aid, critical incident stress management, individual and group stabilization, debriefing and coping skills.

The BIE's Behavioral Health and Wellness Program provides students and staff with services tailored to meet the unique and diverse mental, cultural, spiritual, emotional and social needs of Indigenous communities served by the bureau.

The program also provides various types of technical assistance and hosts trainings to promote suicide prevention and other resiliency-focused topics. Staff at BIE-funded schools will continue to have access to training and certification for Youth Mental Health First Aid, virtual talking circles, monthly behavioral health webinars and professional development opportunities.

*The [Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs](#) advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues; communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration; provides leadership in consultations with Tribes; and serves as the DOI official for intra- and interdepartmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on matters concerning American Indians and Alaska Natives and the federally recognized Tribes in the United States.*

*The Bureau of Indian Education implements federal Indian education programs and funds 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools serving approximately 45,000 students. BIE oversees the operation of two postsecondary schools, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and Haskell Indian Nations University. BIE administers grants for 29 Tribally controlled colleges and universities and two Tribal technical colleges. For more information, visit the BIE website at <https://www.bie.edu/>.*

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