

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Warren schools to share in grant

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WARREN - Warren City Schools and Valley Counseling Services are joining forces to fight truancy and decrease the number of expulsions in the school district.

On Thursday the partnership announced getting a \$50,000 grant from the William Swanston Charitable Fund. Jody Klase, development director at Valley Counseling, said the grant will benefit the school district's new truancy and expulsion prevention program. Valley Counseling will use the money to hire a therapist and case manager to work in the school district during the 2011-12 school year, she explained.

"So often kids that have truancy problems or are expelled we find that the root of the problem is a behavioral health issue, sometimes a family issue," Klase said. "We're hoping to identify these students and to work with them, as well as their families, to address this and prevent expulsion."

Jill Merolla, manager of community outreach and development at Warren, said that as of last week there were 105 expulsions in district, which is about average.

"This gives the school an option before either suspension or expulsion," she commented. "This gives us another tool that will help students and family be successful in school and perhaps give them added support to help them overcome some of the barriers they may have in their lives."

The effort will target students in grades seven to 10, a time when some students are most at risk of skipping, dropping out or being expelled, she said.

After seeing a need in Warren to step up efforts in this area, Valley Services began working with the school district to apply for a grant through the William Swanston Charitable Fund, which focuses on supporting area programs geared toward helping local youth. Klase said this is the first year Valley Services has applied for a grant of this type.

She said the school district will begin classes in the fall with certain students in mind to work with through the program.

"Often the people who know the students the best are their teachers and other staff inside the school," she said. "They already have some idea of which kids have already had a truancy or behavior problem. Our belief is that teachers know their students and they already know which ones need help and those are the kids being targeted."