

# Memorandum of Understanding

*Between the following entities:*

**Browning Public School District # 9**

**&**

**The Blackfeet Tribe, & Blackfeet Tribal Behavioral Health (BTBH)**

This document supports the operational plan for delivering mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment to be provided by BTBH to at-risk school-aged youth on the Blackfeet Reservation and in reservation schools.

## **1. PURPOSE**

The collective entities recognize that the Blackfeet Tribe suffers from multiple health disparities like mental health and SUD stigmas, as evidenced by the 2017 Community Health Assessment, which identified substance abuse as the top community priority. Addressing these issues will necessarily involve the reservation education system.

The entities also suggest that the education process will improve with consistent community-based Mental Health and SUD intervention/prevention services from an organization like BTBH on the reservation at *#12 Starr School Road, Browning, Montana*, where services will be performed or on-site at a location provided by Browning Public Schools.

Each entity has understood that a working relationship must be based on the principles identified in this document to address a reservation-wide epidemic involving Mental Health and SUD. Each intends to establish additional collaborative activities and projects to target youth with access to intervention, prevention, and education that target suicide, crisis, and substance use disorders.

The entities will develop and implement a curriculum that provides the schools with substance use disorder and mental health consultation and direct services offered by licensed addiction counselors (LAC), addiction counselor licensure candidates (ACLC), and a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) via face-to-face, or telehealth as necessary. They will network with other professionals (*i.e., Southern Peigan Health Center, school nurses, Crystal Creek Lodge, school-based therapists, counselors, etc.*), the Indian Health Service, Blackfeet Tribal Health, and academic centers to improve the education process.

The mentioned entities intend to identify approaches to providing Mental Health and SUD prevention, intervention, and educational skills. Each party will solicit the support of the parents/legal guardians and the community members in improving the education system by addressing specific health disparities.

The entities recognize a need to address health-related issues and understand concerns regarding attendance, retention, and encouragement for individuals to seek care. However, choosing between academic requirements or seeking help can create hesitancy in seeking help. Addressing barriers like this can encourage school-aged youth to be mindful of their health and well-being.

This collective agreement may periodically require data collection for evaluation purposes through its services to help enhance or structure the Systems of Care. All data collected will be stored and shared in alignment with the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)*, 42 CFR, Part 2 (*to protect SUD treatment records*), and adherence to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), Montana Codes Annotated (MCA), and other applicable Montana Laws and regulations.

## **2. THEREFORE, THE ENTITIES HAVE THE FOLLOWING UNDERSTANDING:**

### **1. The Browning Public School District will:**

Participate with Blackfeet Tribal Behavioral Health and the Blackfeet Tribe in generating new therapeutic approaches and methods that help promote a healthy lifestyle, behaviors, and life choices against substance use disorders and bring awareness to mental health stigma.

b. Provide “Access to” a secure and safe environment to conduct direct care services as needed. For a fee, if applicable, a space to provide education, individual and group therapy, and to enhance community-based outreach efforts for intervention/prevention techniques.

c. Participate in developing and promoting Mental Health and SUD awareness, prevention, and intervention of substance abuse to Blackfeet reservation communities and tribal members.

d. Partner with other tribal health-related organizations to support wellness needs related to health issues on the reservation for school-aged youth. *For example, consider healthy solutions such as waiving attendance for appointment times to increase accessibility, a willingness to seek care, etc.*

e. Continue to encourage opportunities to collaborate with outside academic centers to enhance faculty knowledge and service delivery and support the coordination of telehealth equipment usage *when applicable*.

f. Provide executive oversight and guidance in the joint efforts of each program and participate in evaluations when necessary.

g. Assist in the timely communication with parents/legal guardians concerning identified health issues with their children and help obtain appropriate parental consent as required.

h. Communicate with BTBH staff to arrange referrals and appointments to BTBH. The agreement may include necessary transportation provided by BPS staff if permissible.

### **2. Blackfeet Tribal Behavioral Health (BTBH) and the Blackfeet Tribe will:**

a. Establish methods suitable to communicate effectively with parents concerning mental health and substance use disorder services provided to school-aged youth and attempt to get appropriate ‘consent to treat’ applications signed for authorization in coordination with services.

b. Employ licensed and credentialed professionals and support staff outlined by the Montana Board of Behavioral Health and the Blackfeet Tribe to provide appropriate services for intended BPS district campuses. (*i.e., Browning Youth*).

c. Participate in generating new ideas for projects and programs that will impact health disparities like substance use disorders in the school-age population.

d. Develop and promote mental health and SUD awareness, prevention, intervention, and early detection programs for our Blackfeet reservation, outlying communities, and tribal members.

e. Provide educational opportunities for BPS faculty and the school-aged youth population to understand the disease concept of substance use disorders or mental health (*i.e., insight classes, etc.*).

- f. Maintain appropriate policy and procedure manuals that outline program standards for the State of Montana and the Indian Health Service for stakeholder measurement and quality assurance.
- g. Depending on resources, BTBH may establish a transitional plan to assist youth referred to a higher level of care, like 3.5 Inpatient treatment, to ensure academic progress is not impacted. This level of care is typically off-reservation.
- h. Assist academic partners in working with the tribe and schools to deliver video-linked remote education, such as telehealth, for Mental Health and SUD services that support outreach efforts and personnel *when applicable*.
- i. As resources are available, support and fund purchasing supplies necessary to maximize the impact of intervention/prevention activities. (*i.e., Red Ribbon Week, etc.*)
- j. Develop a plan to provide *transportation* for referral-based students by a BTBH staff member (gender specific) with coordinated assistance from BPS district staff to/from Campus sites to the BTBH location (**#12 Starr School Road.**).

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### **Communication Plan**

The Browning Public School District # 9 Superintendent (or designees), Blackfeet Tribal Behavioral Health staff members, and the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council (BTBC) representative shall arrange to meet ***routinely*** during the academic school year. Additional meetings may be held to gauge and improve the relationship between each entity.

### **Legal Enforceability**

This MOU is intended to provide a working relationship between the specified entities and is not a legally enforceable document. Each entity agrees to work in good faith to implement the terms of this MOU.

***The partnering entities acknowledge that they have adequate liability insurance applicable to their organization and employees while acting within the scope of their employment when coordinating services. Therefore, each entity assumes any personal injury and property damage risks attributable to employees' negligent acts or omissions.***

### **SIGNED BY THE ENTITIES ON THE EFFECTIVE DATES SET BELOW**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Rebecca Rappold, Superintendent  
 Browning Public School District # 9

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 Date

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 Rodney "Minnow" Gervais  
 Blackfeet Tribal Business Council Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date