

East Windsor Regional School District and iCare - Summary

State and nationwide, the number of students presenting with mental health concerns has risen dramatically over the past decade. Unfortunately, the East Windsor Regional School district has not been immune to these increases. Over the past several years, **the EWRSD has introduced a number of initiatives to offer additional mental health supports, several of which iCare has been instrumental in supporting.** A description of some (not all!) of the initiatives follows.

Since 2018, **the EWRSD has added a counselor at the high school level, an interventionist counselor at the 3-5 grade level, and an interventionist at the high school.** Traditionally, school counselors address both academic and social/emotional needs of students. The interventionist counselors, on the other hand, focus exclusively on the social, emotional and mental health needs of students who require a greater level of care. Additionally, beginning in October 2019, the district has contracted with Rutgers University Behavioral Health to provide two licensed mental health clinicians to support students.

The Rams' Retreat, located in the media center at HHS, opened full-time in September 2019. The room has been designated for students as a wellness room, serving as a space where students can decompress during the day. iCare has helped support this space from its inception, providing a free yoga group after school. JFCS also provided a drop-in counseling program after school, and school counselors run psychoeducational groups in the room during the day. The Rams' Retreat is open to all students.

QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer) Training is being offered to all teaching staff in January and February. QPR is an evidence-based program that educates teachers on how to identify and appropriately respond to signs of suicide. This training was provided to all district administrators last Summer. In addition to teacher training, non-certificated staff, including bus drivers and educational assistants, have also been trained on how to identify and appropriately respond to the signs of suicide.

In December, iCare, in conjunction with the **newly-formed positivity club** at the high school, hosted a "Rock Painting" event whereby students painted messages of hope, inspiration, and acceptance on small rocks. Once painted, students spread and scattered the rocks in various places where their peers could find them. The purpose of the activity was to reduce stigma regarding mental illness, increase empathy, and hopefully provide a positive message for someone in need!