



Lakers helping its students, families with Pathways to Potential

Laker Schools understands that in order for students to get the most out of their education, they need to complete an initial crucial step – attend school consistently.

However, for some students, this isn't as easy as it would seem. Various barriers keep them from coming to school, which will impede their ability to be successful now and in the future.

That's why Laker Schools participate in Pathways to Potential, a program provided by the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS). Pathways is an innovative approach to providing human services that targets five outcome areas: attendance, education, health, safety and self-sufficiency. The Pathways to Potential approach relies on three critical elements to help clients reach their greatest potential: The program goes where the client is located; it works one-on-one with families to identify and remove barriers and connect them to a network of services; and it engages community members and school personnel to help families find their road to success.

Pathways to Potential started at Lakers during the 2014-15 school year. Lakers is one of only a handful of schools in the Thumb region to participate.

Jessica Bruce is the program's representative. Her title is Success Coach. She visits Laker Schools Thursday and Friday and meets with parents/students/social workers.

"Pathways to Potential Success Coaches work with families to identify and overcome barriers to school attendance and self-sufficiency such as housing, food, clothing, child daycare, medical care and utility emergencies," Bruce said. "We want to ensure that basic needs are met at home so that these obstacles do not affect the student's ability to go to school and focus and learn. MDHHS has many services that can help in these areas. When they are not available through the department, we will work together to get families connected to other community resources."

According to MDHHS, Gov. Snyder is a major proponent of Pathways to Potential. Pathways is a model that fits within Gov. Snyder's model to change the way government assists Michiganders by meeting their unique needs so they can achieve success and self-sufficiency. He used Pathways as an example of person-centered government services he wants to provide under this new way of government. This

included the creation of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services through the merger of the former Departments of Health and Human Services. The new department allows for better, more coordinated, more person-focused services to address the unique needs of individuals and families.

Bruce said by participating in Pathways to Potential, schools have an MDHHS worker on site and available to them for questions or concerns.

“Having a worker placed in the community allows families easy access to their caseworker or MDHHS programs,” she said.

Bruce is a Laker graduate and she’s happy to be back in Laker Country.

“Lakers cares about their students and the community as a whole,” she said. “They understand the importance of a healthy home life leading to greater educational success for their students. I’m not surprised at all to see Lakers at the forefront of Pathways to Potential. They recognize the need for our services and how it relates to their students’ success.”

Bruce is available either in the Laker Secondary School office, by email or by phone. She’s eager to help families in any way she can.

“I am grateful to have the opportunity to help families in my community,” she said.

Parents need to give permission for their child to meet with a Success Coach, unless a social worker or other school employee refers a student to a coach.

Parents can contact Jessica Bruce at (989) 245-5225 or brucej6@michigan.gov to set up an appointment.

Schools participating in Pathways to Potential also have access to a program called Families together Building Solutions. It’s a home-based counseling program that works for families who are experiencing issues related to child and family well-being.

For more information on Pathways to Potential, visit www.michigan.gov/pathwaystopotential.



Jessica Bruce