

Nemours Children's Health Receives TD Bank Grant to Improve Equitable Access to Pediatric Mental Health Services



Orlando, Fla. (November 29, 2021) — Nemours Children's Health was recently awarded a grant from TD Bank, America's Most Convenient Bank®, to implement and lead a pilot program that will provide equitable and increased access to pediatric mental health specialists.

The Nemours Children's Health Integrated Behavioral Health Initiative is a one-year pilot to be implemented in primary care locations across Central Florida and Delaware. The program will enable dedicated pediatric psychologists, licensed professional counselors, and licensed clinical social workers to be embedded within a patient's medical home — the pediatric setting in which children receive their comprehensive care — to increase access to holistic mental health services while reducing the stigma of treatment, bolstered by Nemours Children's robust telemedicine infrastructure.

"The pediatric population has shown a marked increase in behavioral health issues at the same time we have seen a significant decline in behavioral health resources," says Dr. Tom Lacy, MD, Medical Director of Primary Care for Nemours Children's Health, Florida. "Early and consistent intervention is key to successful mental health services that are so important in helping children lead healthy and happy lives. The funding from the TD Bank will help us begin reaching for that lofty goal."

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In 2021, Mental Health America identified Florida as the 48th worst state in the nation for access to mental health care, while Delaware ranked 5th. Poor access to mental health providers has resulted in patients either not accessing care or relying on emergency services for behavioral health issues.

"There is a critical need for pediatric mental health services, and that need has only grown over the past 18 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Shelley Sylva, Head of U.S. Corporate Citizenship at TD Bank. "To build a better future, we need to make sure that people of all ages have access to the care they need. We are thrilled to support Nemours Children's Health to help increase access to care and improve health outcomes for children."

The Nemours Children's Health Integrated Behavioral Health Initiative is designed to shift behavioral health care from a model that attempts to coordinate care to one in which services are integrated within the medical home. Building upon expertise in mental health care delivery in its Delaware Valley locations, Nemours Children's will develop an integrated model based on the needs of children in Florida that will ensure high-quality mental health care, better and more equitable access, and enhanced communication between pediatricians and mental health specialists — all of which enhance mental health support for pediatric patients.

Nemours Children's Health provides primary, specialty care and urgent care in four states and operates two freestanding children's hospitals including Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida in Orlando. Nemours Children's provides primary care in over 40 locations.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide remains the second leading cause of death among adolescents, while the Center for Disease Control estimates that at least 3.2 percent of children aged 3-17 years have diagnosed depression. Integration of mental health services into pediatric settings promotes critical detection and prevention through screenings and early therapeutic interventions. Timely and appropriate mental health services have the potential to isolate and reverse negative trends in pediatric health.

"By managing behavioral health earlier in life, the goals of improved population health, improved care, decreased costs and improved provider and family satisfaction can be achieved," added Lacy.

About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of nearly 75 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit Nemours.org.

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