**Executive Summary**

**Employee Assistance Program**

**July 10, 2020**

After a spring unlike any before, it is important that our plans for the re-opening of school include the wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff, and families firmly in mind. It is sobering to think of the sickness and fatalities caused by COVID-19 in our state, in our nation, and around the world.

According to the ***AASA COVID-19 Recovery Task Force Guidelines for Reopening Schools: An Opportunity to Transform Public Education,*** guideline number 4 “ Provide Continuing Support to Students and Adults to Address Their Immediate and Long-Term Physical, Psychological, Social and Emotional Needs: must be a priority as we move forward.Without question, social and emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a critical priority. The psychological, interpersonal and emotional needs of students, staff and families must become a key focal point as reopening occurs. In addition to requisite services and resources, SEL strategies and techniques must become a consistent part of classroom instruction, reinforcing safety, well-being and engagement within the learning community.”

 As you know, the Boone County Schools has an ongoing focus on the mental health addressing student mental health and social emotional learning. Our Boone County School Counselors, School Psychologists and FRYSC, as well as, our Mental Health agency partners, are developing year- long plans for social emotional (SEL) lessons aligned with the CASEL Standards and mental health counseling using a three tiered approach.

Currently Boone County Schools has minimal resources to support our teachers and staff in the area of mental health; we promote self-care, encourage healthy work-life balance, our insurance provides a 24/7 hotline for employees and short and long term medical leave to name a few strategies utilized. Student Services and Human Resources through a collaborative process have determined that having a work environment that promotes positive mental health is essential for employee well-being. “According to the ***Harvard Business Review,*** employers lose as much as $17-44 billion each year to depression. On the other hand, employees are happy when their mental illnesses are acknowledged in a positive manner. A happy employee is 12% more productive than unhappy ones.” Through our research, an employee assistance program is one of the greatest missing benefits for our employees.

An employee assistance program assists employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotional well-being. EAPs generally offer free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services for employees. EAP counselors may also work in a consultative role with managers and supervisors to address employee and organizational challenges and needs. Many corporations, academic institutions and/or government agencies are active in helping organizations prevent and cope with workplace violence, trauma, and other emergency response situations. There is a variety of support programs offered for employees. Even though EAPs are mainly aimed at work-related issues, there are a variety of programs that can assist with problems outside of the workplace

The ***Kentucky Model Procurement Code*** requires that any award of business for expenditures in excess of $30,000, annually for like kind of products/services must be conducted via a sealed competitive bid process.

However, the Code allows for some exceptions. One exception states “A local public agency may contract or purchase through noncompetitive negotiations only when a written determination is made that competition is not feasible and it is further determined in writing by a designee of the local public agency that: An emergency exists which will cause public harm as a result of the delay in competitive procedures”.

Without an Employee Assistance Program, we are not be able to assist our employees to addressing their acute needs, in a timely manner. Therefore, we may lose an ever-increasing number of employees due to serious mental illness or continue to create a barrier to high quality teaching and learning.

We recommend that Mr. Turner and the Boone County Board of Education declare that an emergency exists which precludes our ability to contract for an Employee Assistance Program. The declaration will allow us to contract with an agency for 1 year while completing the noncompetitive bid process.

Respectfully submitted,

 Kathy Reutman

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