



Benzie County Office
6051 Frankfort Hwy, Ste 100
Benzonia, MI 49616
Phone: 231-882-4409
Fax: 231-882-0143

**Leelanau County
Personal Health Office**
7401 E. Duck Lake Rd
Lake Leelanau, MI 49653
Phone: 231-256-0200
Fax: 231-882-0143

**Leelanau County
Environmental Health Office**
8527 E. Government Center Dr.
Suite LL-007
Suttons Bay, MI 49682
Phone: 231-256-0201
Fax: 231-256-0225

www.bldhd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Celebrating National School Counseling Week

School-Based Therapists Helping Students Thrive in Benzie & Leelanau Counties

This week, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) proudly recognizes National School Counseling Week and shines a spotlight on the vital role that school-based therapists play in supporting the mental health and well-being of children and teens.

Every day, BLDHD's team of four dedicated school-based therapists works in schools across Benzie and Leelanau Counties to provide care, support, and early intervention for students experiencing emotional, behavioral, or social challenges. These professionals help students build coping skills, connect families to services, and promote a safe and healthy environment where students can learn and grow.

"We are grateful for the commitment of our school-based therapists who help remove barriers to care for children in our community," said Dr. Meyerson, Medical Director for the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. "Access to mental health services right in the school setting means students get the help they need when they need it, without the worry of transportation, scheduling challenges, or delays that sometimes come with traditional clinic settings."

Spotlight on School-Based Therapists

This week, we're especially honored to highlight our mental health professionals who work in our School Wellness Programs and who consistently go above and beyond:

"What I've noticed, is that Benzie Central's kids and teens are adaptive, creative, curious about their world, and with time, willing to engage in counseling," said Kathryn, Mental Health Professional for the Benzie County Central Schools. "I've enjoyed this rewarding work!"

"I have been working in schools since 2018 providing direct mental health and crisis support services to students," said Crystal, Mental Health Professional for the Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools. "The most rewarding part of my work is being an advocate for the 'whole child,' ensuring that their emotional well-being and social development are nurtured as deeply as their academic success. I am passionate about the holistic approach to education, and I find it deeply fulfilling to help students navigate their social and emotional journeys so they can thrive academically."

"My background is in trauma-informed care, with experience working with refugee youth, survivors of abuse, and individuals in crisis across community mental health and advocacy settings," said Gerardo, Mental Health Professional for the Leland Public School. "The most rewarding part of working in schools is giving back to the community that helped raise me and being a safe, consistent adult for students and families in the Leland community."

"As a School Wellness Program Mental Health Therapist, I'm really enjoying building relationships and being a consistent, supportive presence for students right where they are," said Elise, Mental Health Professional for the Suttons Bay Public Schools. "It's incredibly rewarding to see how meaningful even small moments of connection can be in a school setting."

School-based therapists play a key role in helping students:

- Manage stress, anxiety, and depression
- Improve social skills and relationships
- Cope with trauma or life changes

- Stay engaged and successful in school

Access to mental health care is an essential part of overall health. By embedding therapists directly into school settings, BLDHD is helping ensure that children and families in Benzie and Leelanau Counties can receive timely care, support positive outcomes, and thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

“Having quality mental health professionals in our schools means that students are supported where they spend so much of their day,” added Lauren Wolf, LMSW, Supervisor. “It strengthens prevention, reduces stigma, and provides a safe, confidential space for children and adolescents to work through the social-emotional concerns that affect their lives.”

For more information about BLDHD’s school-based health services, school wellness partnerships, or community mental health resources, visit www.bldhd.org.

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Media Contact:
Rachel Pomeroy MPH, CHES
Public Information Officer
231-882-6085



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