

# Tell Us Something GOOD

BHERO

“Kids don’t wake up in the morning looking to cause trouble or get under their teachers’ skin... They need more support, not more discipline. When we provide the support and resources they need, those behaviors reduce drastically.”

—Russ Riehl, Principal - Simle Middle School

## PROGRAM

**SANFORD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

## SCHOOL

**Simle Middle School, Bismarck**

## COLLABORATOR

**Sanford Health**

**COST:** Sanford currently provides this program at no cost to the school. Rather, Sanford bills Medicaid and private insurances.

**INCEPTION:** Since 2018, Sanford Health has provided behavioral health support for students at Simle Middle School in Bismarck and at Wilton Public School.

**DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE:** Sanford’s behavioral health partnership with North Dakota schools is intended to be a Tier 3 support, complementing an upstream approach to arrive at a full continuum of support for behavioral health in schools. Through this partnership, students whose behavioral health needs exceed the expertise and resources of educators, including school counselors, are able to meet with a clinician from Sanford Health right in their own school, eliminating barriers such as transportation and time.

## IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY—

## ALL ABOUT SIMLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

When the North Dakota Human Services, Behavioral Health Division announced a grant in 2018 that would allow schools to invest in behavioral health prevention and early intervention strategies, Russ Riehl jumped at the opportunity.

“We have been fully implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for six years now. So when this grant became available, we had a lot of data pieces and interventions already in place,” said Riehl, Principal at Simle Middle School in Bismarck. “We were ready to take that next step [in providing access to Tier 3 Behavioral Health Intervention].”

13 schools across North Dakota applied for the grant, and Simle Middle was selected as the recipient. Because of Sanford Health’s extensive presence throughout North Dakota, Riehl knew that a partnership with the organization could help Simle Middle School build a program that would be effective, sustainable, and scalable. He contacted Dr. Craig Lambrecht, CEO of Sanford Bismarck at the time, to propose a partnership.

“It felt right,” Riehl said. “I told him about the amazing things that we’re doing, and yet how we still have some kids that need more than we can provide. He recognized that, and so did a lot of the folks at Sanford.”

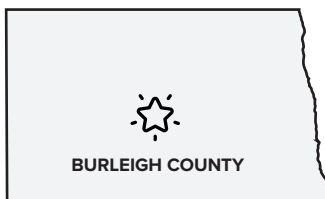
Sanford Health and Simle Middle School launched their behavioral health partnership in October 2019. Through this program, a Sanford Health psychologist is located within Simle Middle School. She is able to meet one-on-one with the students whose needs have previously gone unmet, providing support and teaching skills to cope with life’s challenges.

By having a clinician located on school property and providing services within school hours, Simle and Sanford are working to remove the barriers that often prevent students from receiving behavioral health support.

**SIMLE MIDDLE ENROLLMENT:**  
**1,050+**

**PROGRAM PARTNERS SINCE**  
**October 2019**

**STUDENTS SERVED (SO FAR!)**  
**Approximately 50**



**BHERO**  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

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## BHERO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

### WHO WE ARE.

A group of educators and advocates passionate about the importance of behavioral health in our schools and communities.

### GET INVOLVED

Schools interested in learning more about similar partnerships are encouraged to contact Michael Salwei at Sanford Health or Russ Riehl at Simle Middle School.

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“Rather than having to go off campus and losing two hours, they may lose 30 minutes of classroom time. Parents don’t have to take time off work and figure out transportation,” Riehl said. “Removing these barriers reduces risk of students missing their appointments.”

To ensure that the students with greatest needs have access to support, and to avoid overwhelming the system, Simle and Sanford have developed a five-step referral process. First, teachers identify students who are showing internalizing indicators and could benefit from additional support. They submit a nomination form to the school’s Interdisciplinary Problem-Solving Team, who look for concerning patterns or students who have been nominated by multiple teachers.

The team may either suggest other interventions that have not been utilized for the student yet, or bring in the school psychologist to perform a DESSA strengths-based assessment. The school psychologist will then work with Sanford’s clinician, who performs an intake with the student. Finally, the clinician creates an individualized treatment plan based on the student’s needs.

“Every student is different. Some students might just need to check in with her for 15 minutes a month, and others may need 45 minutes a week,” Riehl said. “We give her that flexibility and have staff available to help her with the scheduling piece.”

### SUCCESS STORY

In the first two years of this partnership, Sanford’s psychologist has met with at least 50 students at Simle Middle School—and the results have been outstanding. Simle’s efforts to build a comprehensive system of support have yielded nearly a 75% drop in discipline referrals since the 2015-2016 school year.

“Kids don’t wake up in the morning looking to cause trouble or get under their teachers’ skin. There are probably negative situations in their home or personal life that are impacting their behavior. They need more support, not more discipline,” Riehl said. “When we provide the support and resources they need, those behaviors reduce drastically.”

Riehl recalls one particular student, who was first referred to the program in eighth grade. At the time, the student struggled with social interaction and personal hygiene, and was being referred to the office almost daily. Two years later, the student is prepared to enter high school as a “whole different learner.”

“The confidence and self regulation is absolutely incredible,” Riehl said. “At the end of the day, we want students to be self-sufficient, productive citizens, to know what their triggers are and be able to cope with them. That particular student really has grown so much.”

## BHERO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

### BH CONTINUUM OF CARE

This case study features Sanford Behavioral Health services as a Treatment option within the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care; however, this programming may span additional portions of the continuum depending on its use.

