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10m grant funds program to boost children's mental health care

By Olivia Quintana GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

A new initiative will provide \$10 million to three community health centers and Boston Medical Center to give children in the region better access to mental health services.

Organizers said the funding, provided by the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, will allow the Dimock Center in Roxbury, the Codman Square Health Center in Dorchester, and the Lowell Community Health Center to create a model that combines mental health care with primary care for children.

Lisa Fortuna, the co-director of the TEAM UP initiative at BMC, said the doctors are hoping to provide behavioral health care at the community health centers so that families can receive all care in one place.

"There really is a lack of services that let young people access quality mental health services quickly and early on," Fortuna said. "The initiative definitely has a mission to be able to really make new ground in the area of behavioral health integration in primary care pediatrics."

Dr. Kumble Rajesh, chief medical officer at the Lowell Community Health Center, said the fund has allowed for him to work directly with mental health providers as a team for his patients.

"With this grant, we can recruit and hire clinicians and mental health providers to work with us on-site to be able to provide care to these families," Rajesh said. "It is so comforting to see a patient and just walk out of my office and ask someone to come into the room and talk with the family."

Dr. Nandini Sengupta, the medical director for health services at the Dimock Center, said the project is working to determine how primary care doctors can work together with behavioral health specialists and community health workers.

"We have a rigorous evaluation team to look at every aspect of what we're doing and see what's working and what's not," Sengupta said.

Sengupta said a main focus of the project is developing a screening process to determine whether children might need treatment.



For more information about all of the services provided by The Dimock Center, please go to <http://www.dimock.org>