



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS WITH UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
SMART CENTER PROGRAM TO OPEN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH TELE-SUITES**

The tele-suites will give young people online access to needed mental health services at multiple locations in Shelby County.

Shelby County, TN – Shelby County Government, in partnership with the University of Memphis SMART Center program, will open mental health tele-suites for young people, giving students access to needed mental health services. Through the tele-suites, mental health counselors from the SMART Center, a tele-behavioral clinic, will be able to provide 30-45-minute online counseling and psychotherapy services for middle and high school students.

Students will log on to receive those services at ten locations: Trezevant High School, Booker T. Washington High School, Booker T. Washington Wellness Center, Cordova Middle School, Grandview Heights Middle School, Hamilton K-8 School, Hamilton High School, Westside Middle School, MLK Prep High School, and the Youth & Family Resource Center.

The SMART Center is a tele-behavioral health clinic that provides remote services to youth and their families and caregivers in the Mid-South area. The center will work with school counselors and other school personnel to identify students in need of mental health care services. After a student's session has been scheduled, the student will be admitted to a private room while the supervising adult waits outside. The Youth Mental Tele-Suites are scheduled to open later this year.

A resolution to donate ten computers to the University of Memphis SMART Center was approved by the Shelby County Board of Commissioners on April 11.



Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: “Everyone should have access to mental health care, including our youth. Studies have shown that mental health services for youth and their families can make a tremendous difference in their lives. This is particularly true now, after the harrowing time we have all had because of the pandemic. That’s why I am grateful that this partnership between Shelby County Government and the UofM SMART Center will provide online mental health services to our young people. Thank you to the Shelby County Commission for approving our plan to invest in our youth’s mental health.”

Dr. Cedrick Gray, Shelby County Director of Education: “As an educator in our county, I’m grateful for the support of the SMART Center team in providing access to quality mental health support for our youth. As a parent, I’m elated to know that all our youth will now have access to the mental health help they deserve. The partnership between the SMART Center and Shelby County Government is a real value-added benefit for Shelby County’s youngest citizens.”

Janet Lo, Shelby County Nonprofit Committee Co-Chair and Community Partnerships Manager: “We know the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the need for youth to have access to mental health services. But history has shown us that referrals or appointments to mental health providers won’t work if children can’t get to those providers. With these mental health tele-suites, we’ll be able to connect students with online counseling services and provide hope and relief for young people in need.”

Dr. Susan Elswick, University of Memphis Smart Center Founder: “Those of us who work with young people at the University of Memphis SMART Center are happy to be part of this important collaboration. This donation of computers from Shelby County will allow us to connect with students who under other circumstances, have extreme difficulties accessing mental health care.”

(End of Release)