

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield provides funding to 75 Arkansas schools for the creation of calming rooms

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (November 9, 2023) — Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield announced today that 75 schools in Arkansas have been selected to receive \$2,500 each to create calming rooms to address the mental well-being of Arkansas students.

The company announced its Take Good Care Calming Room initiative in July and began accepting applications from schools August 1. According to state data, more than 14%, or 83,135 Arkansas children and teens, are dealing with anxiety and depression. Calming rooms give students a quiet place to reflect and refocus so they can perform their best when they return to the classroom.

“The same way students have difficulty focusing in class when they are hungry or tired, they can’t be their best selves in the classroom or at home if they are dealing with issues like stress and anxiety,” said Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield President and CEO Curtis Barnett. “In recognition of Arkansas Blue Cross’ 75th Anniversary and our company’s commitment to improving access to behavioral health resources, we are investing in the creation of calming rooms in 75 Arkansas schools as one way to support better mental health for students.”

Calming rooms provide a space to help students regulate their emotions and often feature items such as:

- Soft lighting
- Tranquil colors
- Comfortable furniture
- Positive, inspirational messages
- Journals, coloring books and other sensory objects

“In addition to improved behavioral health, schools with calming rooms have reported additional benefits such as fewer disciplinary issues and better grades,” Barnett added, referring to a study by the Boston Charter Research Collaborative. “Young people these days face challenges many of us didn’t have growing up, like cyberbullying. Learning how to cope with difficult things in a healthy way is a tool they can carry with them through adulthood.”

Each school will oversee the rules and usage of their calming rooms based on the needs of their students. The spaces can also be used for counseling sessions and group discussions.

“Arkansas Blue Cross did not receive applications from schools in all 75 counties as initially hoped,” Barnett said, “but we still wanted to fund 75 rooms, so we looked closely at the applications and were able to select additional schools in a few counties.”

Schools selected to receive calming rooms include:

Arkansas County

DeWitt High School

Ashley County

Hamburg Middle School

Baxter County

Guy Berry College and Career Academy

Benton County

Founders Classical Academy, Bentonville

Boone County

Harrison High School

Bradley County

Warren High School

Calhoun County

Hampton Middle School

Carroll County

Eureka Springs High School

Clark County

Gurdon High School

Clay County

Piggott High School

Cleburne County

Heber Springs Middle School

Cleveland County

Woodlawn Elementary School

Colombia County

Apostolic Christian Academy

Conway County

Morrilton High School

Craighead County

Bay Elementary School

Crawford County

Butterfield Trail Middle School

Crittenden County

Earle High School

Cross County

Wynne High School

Dallas County

Fordyce High School

Drew County

Monticello High School

Faulkner County

Mayflower Middle School

Franklin County

Ozark Middle School

Fulton County

Salem School District

Garland County

Mountain Pine Elementary School

Grant County

Sheridan High School

Greene County

Paragould Junior/Senior High School

Hempstead County

Hope High School

Hot Spring County

Bismarck Public Schools

Howard County

Nashville Junior High School

Independence County

Cedar Ridge High School

Izard County

Calico Rock High School

Jackson County

Tuckerman High School

Jefferson County

Pine Bluff Junior High School

Johnson County

Lamar High School

Oark High School

Lafayette County

Lafayette County High School

Lawrence County

Hillcrest Elementary School

Lincoln County

Star City High School

Little River County

Ashdown High School

Logan County

Paris Middle School

Lonoke County

Cabot Middle School South

Madison County

Huntsville Middle School

Marion County

Ozark Mountain School District

Mississippi County

Blytheville Chickasaw Preparatory Academy
Armored High School

Monroe County

Brinkley High School

Montgomery County

Mount Ida High School

Nevada County

Nevada Elementary School

Newton County

Deer K-12 School
Mt. Judea K-12 School

Ouachita County

Camden Fairview Middle School

Perry County

Anne Watson Elementary School

Phillips County

J.F. Wahl Elementary School
Barton High School

Pike County

Murfreesboro High School

Poinsette County

Trumann Middle School

Polk County

Mena High School

Pope County

Secondary Learning Center, Russellville High School

Prairie County

Hazen Public Schools

Pulaski County

LR West High School of Innovation

Randolph County

M.D. Williams Intermediate School

Saline County

Benton Junior High School

Scott County

Waldron High School

Searcy County

Leslie Intermediate School

Sebastian County

Trinity Catholic School

Sevier County

Horatio Public School

Sharp County

Cave City Middle School

Saint Francis County

Palestine-Wheatley Senior High School

Stone County

Mountain View School District

Union County

Junction City Elementary School

Van Buren County

South Side Bee Branch

Washington County

Ramay Junior High School

White County

Pangburn High School

Woodruff County

Augusta Elementary School

Yell County

Calico Rock High School

About Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Founded in 1948, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, is the largest health insurer in Arkansas. Arkansas Blue Cross and its affiliates have more than 3,300 employees. The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association is comprised of 34 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans that collectively provide healthcare coverage for nearly 106 million members — one in three Americans.