

NEDHSA, Delta Head Start to serve more than 400 students with AI's Pals program

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONROE, LA - [Northeast Delta Human Services Authority \(NEDHSA\)](#) and Delta Head Start have entered an agreement to facilitate the provision of AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices.

AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices is an early childhood curriculum designed to increase social and emotional competencies in young children. The resiliency-based curriculum provides real-life situations that introduce children to health-promoting concepts and build prosocial skills, such as understanding feelings, accepting differences, caring about others, using self-control, and managing anger.

This program will be taught in Delta Head Start pre-kindergarten classrooms located in East Carroll, Madison, and Richland Parishes, bringing services to more than 400 students. NEDHSA already provides similar programs in Ouachita, Lincoln, Madison, West Carroll, and Franklin parishes.

NEDHSA Executive Director Dr. Monteic A. Sizer said this is part of a set of child and adult initiatives that will ultimately improve individuals, families, institutions, and communities.

"We're starting at this young age because it helps increase the chances these children will grow up and live their full human potential," Dr. Sizer said. "Programs like AI's Pals offer children solutions and strategies to help overcome early life problems associated with individual, family and community trauma."

AI's Pals follows the premise that intervening during a child's formative years will reduce the likelihood of developing negative social and emotional behavioral patterns.



Northeast Delta Human Services Authority Executive Director Dr. Monteic A. Sizer signs the agreement with Delta Head Start to facilitate the provision of AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices.



Delta Head Start Program Director Martha Ann Thomas signs the agreement with Northeast Delta Human Services Authority to facilitate the provision of AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices.

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Delta Head Start Program Director Martha Ann Thomas said they are excited to bring AI's Pals to their schools.

"AI's Pals helps us deal with the socioemotional piece of our curriculum, and that's something our children need to express to help resolve issues and conflicts," Thomas said.

The AI's Pals program is fully funded through the NEDHSA.

Dr. Sizer said that if these programs aren't in place, "those negative social determinants and adverse health outcomes will continue to follow the children into adulthood."

"We're creating ecosystems to help reduce early onset of mental illness, drug addiction, violence, suicide, teen pregnancy, school expulsion, to name a few. We are doing this because we know these things are highly correlated with adult poverty, homelessness, high unemployment, and early death," Dr. Sizer said.

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