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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WACO ISD ANNOUNCES NEW MENTAL HEALTH BENEFIT FOR EMPLOYEES**

**Waco, TX** – When teachers return to Waco ISD schools for the coming school year, they will have direct access to a dedicated, full-time licensed professional counselor employed by Ascension Medical Group Providence. Paid for with federal stimulus funds, this new mental health benefit will be available at no cost to the district’s employees. Waco ISD is one of the first school districts in Texas to offer this type of mental health benefit for employees.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have been fortunate to partner with Ascension Medical Group Providence in support of our employees’ health and well-being,” said Dr. Susan Kincannon, Waco ISD Superintendent. “About a year ago, the team from Ascension Texas started helping us explore ways to better support the mental health of our employees. This is one of the ideas that came out of those discussions.”

Employees will be able to schedule appointments with the counselor at a time that fits their schedule. The counselor will have an office at the Greater Waco Advanced Health Care Academy, one of Waco ISD’s career and technical education campuses. The counselor will provide a variety of services including individual and group counseling, behavioral health and social determinant screening, expedited referrals, community resource information, staff training, and support for crisis situations.

“Waco ISD is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all staff,” Kincannon said. “The past few years have been challenging, and we look forward to offering this new benefit to our employees. We are placing a strong emphasis on leading from the heart, and that starts with giving our staff the support they need.”

Following an extensive search to identify the right person for the role, Ascension Medical Group Providence hired Tyler Tomek, MACP, LPC. He brings eight years of experience in a variety of mental health settings including private practice, intake, and outpatient services.

“I am excited to be part of the partnership between Ascension Medical Group Providence and Waco ISD,” Tomek said. “I’m honored to have the opportunity to provide support to Waco ISD staff and make a positive contribution to the district.”

Tomek specializes in anxiety, depression, stress, major life transitions, and self-esteem. He is also experienced in case management, crisis intervention, and treatment planning.

“Ascension Medical Group Providence and Ascension Providence are proud to offer access to a licensed professional counselor for teachers and staff at Waco Independent School District,” said Philip Patterson, president of Ascension Providence. “Tyler is a trusted behavioral health professional who fits the positive culture of Waco ISD and will deliver care plans that address a wide range of behavioral and mental health conditions.”

### **About Ascension Texas**

In Texas, Ascension operates Ascension Providence and Ascension Seton, which includes Dell Children’s Medical Center, a comprehensive children’s hospital and pediatric Level I trauma center, and Dell Seton Medical Center at The University of Texas, the region’s only Level I trauma center for adults. Ascension Seton partners with Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin and shares a common vision of transforming healthcare through a focus on quality and value. Serving Texas for 120 years, Ascension is a faith-based healthcare organization committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. Ascension is one of the leading non-profit and Catholic health systems in the U.S., operating 2,600 sites of care – including 150 hospitals and more than 50 senior living facilities – in 20 states and the District of Columbia. Visit [www.ascension.org](http://www.ascension.org) and [www.dellchildrens.net](http://www.dellchildrens.net).

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