

May 15, 2023

Each year, the month of May is recognized nationally as “Mental Health Awareness Month”. During this time, we highlight the importance of good mental health functioning and its impact upon everyone. At D’Veal, our dedicated staff work tirelessly every day to remove the stigma and barriers to access to care for individuals and families with mental health needs. Over the past 27 years, our work as a community-based mental health agency has continued to expand, especially in the area of school-based mental health services. Currently, D’Veal provides school-based mental health services within six public school districts and school-linked services in four additional school districts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us, including the mental health workforce. Prior to the pandemic, our referral data for youth experiencing mental health challenges included problems such as stress, trauma, anxiety, and heightened levels of depression. The pandemic exacerbated these issues and resulted in a mental health crisis nationally. We have witnessed firsthand communities of color being disproportionately impacted. As a result, referrals for services have steadily increased. D’Veal’s current referral data indicates an alarming increase in the rate of depression, suicidal ideation and psychiatric hospitalizations.

D’Veal continues to be responsive to the consumers and communities it serves. D’Veal’s success as a community-based non-profit can only be attributed to our diverse and talented workforce. We continue to implement innovative work place strategies focused on staff retention and continue to recruit, hire, and train qualified mental health professionals to work in this unique setting.

As the Chief Executive Officer of D’Veal, May 2023 marks my 43rd year in the field of social work and 27 years as the

founder of D'Veal. We pledge our continued commitment at D'Veal to raising awareness and reducing the stigma related to mental health issues. We salute the boldness of those seeking services and the success of everyone working to improve the mental health functioning of others.

John McCall

**John McCall, LCSW, ACSW
Chief Executive Officer**