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Wednesday, September 06, 2006

4/9/2006

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## The doctor almost always is in

**Cara Host**  
 Staff writer

WAYNESBURG -- Missing class no longer has to be part of the visit to the child psychiatrist for students in Central Greene School District.



Dr. Terri Roh, a child psychiatrist at Centerville Clinics, speaks with an actress posing as a patient in this image taken from an informational DVD. Roh is demonstrating telepsychiatry, a new program in Central Greene School District this year.

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A pilot program, called telepsychiatry, was introduced at Waynesburg Central elementary and high schools this year. Now, children can make appointments without leaving the school building.

"Before telepsychiatry, we had some concerns because some of the students left for several hours for their appointments and sometimes they would not come back to school at all," said Dr. Jerome Bartley, superintendent at Central Greene. "With this program, it takes that concern away and has really helped with attendance."

Value Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania, Greene County Human Services, Centerville Clinics and the state Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services worked to implement telepsychiatry in Central Greene. Value acts as a quasi-insurance company for people on public assistance. Human Services purchased the teleconferencing equipment. A child psychiatrist from Centerville Clinics, Dr. Terri Roh, counsels the children and the state agency

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By using teleconferencing equipment, the psychiatrist and the child see each other on a television or projection screen. From there, the telepsychiatry visit progresses much like a traditional office visit, with the two discussing how the child is feeling and how any medication is affecting the child.

A telepsychiatry session takes considerably less time than a traditional visit, where a student can easily lose more than an hour of class time, considering travel time.

Face-to-face visits for more in-depth therapy are not eliminated under the program. Instead, child patients will visit Roh at his office in Waynesburg every fourth appointment.

About six students from Central Greene have used the telepsychiatry program since it started in October. The children have a variety of diagnoses including attention deficit disorder, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The problems can affect a child's school work, and that is only compounded if the child has to miss school to visit the psychiatrist, said Karen Bennett, director of Greene County Human Services.

Students who regularly leave school to make psychiatrist appointments can miss up to 30 school days a year, according to statistics compiled by Human Services. Through telepsychiatry, those missed days can be reduced by up to 75 percent.

Central Greene is the first school district in the state to implement telepsychiatry. However, for several years, doctors have been using teleconferencing in other venues as a tool to treat patients in rural areas.

"We tried it as a pilot program in Central Greene because they wanted to make sure how the students would react to it," said Laverne M. Cichon, chief executive officer of Value.

The results were positive enough that the partnership is trying to expand telepsychiatry to other Greene County school districts as well as elsewhere around the state.

## Reader Comments

Posted: Thursday, April 13, 2006

Article comment by: [b ingham](#)

What is the transmission medium for the program ? Is the system HIPAA compliant ? What types of equipment are used ? Is this paid for with tax dollars ? Who is the technical lead on the project ? Who administers the project, value or greene human services ? Who is the primary contact at greene human services for the project ? Doesn't fayette county have a similar project up and running ?

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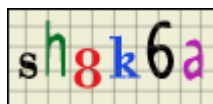
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