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AL Department of Mental Health awards \$3.2M to start Project LAUNCH

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By Kelvin Reynolds

TUSCALOOSA, AL (WBRC) - The Alabama Department of Mental Health awarded \$3.2 million dollar grant over the next five years to start Project LAUNCH.

LAUNCH stands for Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health. That was a the focus of a two-day event wrapping up at the Bryant Conference Center on the University of Alabama campus Thursday.

Nearly 300 people attended.

Money from the grant helps pay for assessments on children to determine what their needs are in terms of mental and emotional development and if there are local agencies already in place in the Tuscaloosa area that can them and their families.

The project hopes to help children 8 years old and younger.

"We know and we understand that if we can start identifying those social and emotional needs and building up that child's self esteem they're going to be able to be better prepared for school. They're going to be better prepared for learning," said April Kendrick, Director of Child Development Resources at the University of Alabama.

Kendrick says that Alabama comes in 44th out of 50 states in childhood outcomes. So there's hope that identifying what these kids need early on will help them succeed later in life.

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