

School-Based Mental Health

Mentally healthy students are more likely to go to school ready to learn, actively engage in school activities, have supportive and caring connections with adults and young people, use appropriate problem-solving skills, have non-aggressive behaviors, and add to positive school culture. The Center for Mental Health in Schools estimates that between 12 and 22 percent of school-aged children and youth have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

Because children and youth spend the majority of their time in school, schools play an increasingly critical role in supporting students. Studies have shown that developing comprehensive school mental health programs help students achieve academically and provide experiences that build social skills, leadership, self-awareness and caring connections to adults in their school and community.

School districts implement school-based mental health services using a variety of strategies, programs and staffing models. Schools may hire therapists and/or social workers, provide access to prevention programming, identify and address early mental health challenges; and offer treatment options through community partnerships.

External and school-based mental health providers, however, are struggling to meet the demand for mental health services in schools due to staffing challenges. There are also a limited number of mental health supports available for students in crisis (e.g. lack of inpatient beds available). Many intermediate units support students with varying levels of mental health needs through outpatient clinics, partial hospitalization programs, intensive behavioral health services, and school-based mental health.

Legislative Request

Additional Funding:

- To increase mental health clinicians in schools (counselors, social workers, and psychologists).
- To recruit and retain mental health clinicians.
- For school-based partial hospitalization programs.



FAST FACTS:

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2018-2019, adolescents aged 12-17 years reported:

15.1%

had a major depressive episode

36.7%

had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness

18.8%

seriously considered attempting suicide

15.7%

made a suicide plan

17.4%

of children aged 2-8 years had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder