

Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2023

Young people experience mental health conditions about as often as adults—about 1 in 5 struggle with severe mental health problems—but they often have a hard time getting services.¹ In fact, only about 10 percent of people between the ages of 3 and 17 receive counseling or other services from a mental health professional.² This is particularly concerning given that, without early identification and treatment, mental health conditions can cause young people to experience difficulties in school, social problems, and other challenges that follow them into adulthood.³

Schools are an ideal setting to recognize students who need mental health services and quickly connect them with help. With the right training, teachers, families, and community members can make sure kids are connected with any needed mental health services. Providing these services in school can help decrease the stigma and eliminate barriers—like transportation or missing class—that keep some kids from getting help.

Teachers, school staff, and families understand the importance of helping kids who are struggling with mental health problems. However, many schools—particularly in rural and underserved communities—operate on tight budgets that prevent them from being able to fund the necessary supports to meet their students' mental health needs.

The *Mental Health Services for Students Act* would help schools address these challenges by strengthening comprehensive, school-based mental health services. Specifically, this legislation would help students by providing funding to:

- Build partnerships between schools and community-based organizations that can help students get mental health services at school;
- Train teachers, families, and community members to recognize when a student is experiencing a mental health crisis, and make sure they get the help they need; and
- Recognize best practices for the delivery of mental health care in school-based settings and help formalize relationships between entities that support the mental and emotional health of children and adolescents in school settings.

To achieve these goals, the legislation provides \$300 million in funding to local educational agencies, tribal schools and community-based organizations to forge these partnerships and help fund these important activities.

Endorsing organizations: ACTNow for Mental Health (ANMH), American Academy of Pediatrics, American Art Therapy Association, American Counseling Association, American Psychological Association, American Therapeutic Recreation Association, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), Clinical Social Work Association, First Focus Campaign for Children, Girls, Inc., Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, Inseparable, International OCD Foundation, International Society for Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses, NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD), National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), National Register of Health Service Psychologists, Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (NJHSA), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), NHMH – No Health Without Mental Health, Sandy Hook Promise, Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance, School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), The Kennedy Forum, The Trevor Project, Trust for America's Health (TFAH)

¹ National Institute of Mental Health, "Mental Illness," *NIH* (January 2021) (online at: https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml#part_155771).

² National Survey of Children's Health, "Percent of Children (ages 3-17) Who Received Any Treatment or Counseling from a Mental Health Professional," *Kaiser Family Foundation* (2019) (online at: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/child-access-to-mental-health-care/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>)

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Children's Mental Health," *CDC* (March 2023) (online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html>).