



Increasing Mental Health Services for Students in Schools, K-12

ISSUE:

Historically, 1 in 5 youth experience some type of mental health disorder that can cause significant challenges at home, school, and in their community. **Yet only 10 percent of U.S. children and adolescents ages 3 to 17-years-old typically receive any treatment or counseling from a mental health professional.** The COVID-19 pandemic has made this disparity even worse.

BACKGROUND:

Early interventions are critical for successful mental health treatment. Schools are an important setting to help identify mental health problems early, whether in-person or virtual. Schools also can be a crucial link to mental health services for students, especially in rural communities, where resources are scarce. **The need for school-based mental health services has never been greater.** For example, **by the end of high school, one student in five will have experienced an episode of depression.** With early identification and treatment, mental health disorders often can be addressed before significant impairment occurs. **If left untreated, these disorders can lead to academic failure, family conflicts, substance use, and even suicide.**

SOLUTION: *The “Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2021”*

School administrators, teachers and other staff need support to respond appropriately to the mental health needs of their students. The *“Mental Health Services for Students Act”* would help to address these needs by providing up to **\$2 million in new grant funding for each of five years to revise, increase, and expand SAMHSA’s existing Project AWARE State Educational Grant Program for mental health services.** These increased grants would help schools provide much-needed school-based mental health services for students to:

- Help schools partner with community mental health professionals, including child and adolescent psychiatrists, to provide behavioral and mental health services for K-12 students that is **trauma-informed and evidence-based;**
- Provide appropriate professional development to school personnel to help **recognize the early signs of mental or behavioral health issues;**
- Help local communities develop **policies to assist students in dealing with trauma and violence;** and
- Establish mechanisms for children and adolescents to **report incidents of violence** or plans by other children, adolescents, or adults to commit violence.

CONGRESSIONAL ASK:

Thank you to House Members who passed H.R. 721, “Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2021” by Reps. Napolitano (D-CA), Katko (R-NY), on May 12, 2021.

Senators, please co-sponsor and advance companion bill S. ____, sponsored by Sen. Smith (D-MN)

American Association of
Child & Adolescent
Psychiatry