

MENTAL HEALTH

Overview

To ensure all children can learn, schools must provide safe and healthy environments that support and enhance skills essential for school readiness and academic success. To accomplish this goal, every school must have dedicated, highly qualified school mental health professionals—vital school team members available to work with all children. Without these professionals, academic and nonacademic outcomes suffer. Investment in recruiting and retaining school mental health professionals and identifying and implementing evidence-based mental health interventions is essential to achieving successful outcomes for all children and youth.

Members of Congress are Urged to:

► **Support the CARE for Student Mental Health Act in the Senate (S. 4041)** to authorize the two mental health grants originally funded under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to address the pipeline for and shortages of school-based mental health professionals.

This bill:

- Clarifies each grant's distinction, purpose, and allowable activities to help eligible entities quickly determine which grant best meets their needs.
- Authorizes and streamlines the Strengthening the Pipeline of School-Based Mental Health Services Providers grant (formerly named MHSP), supporting partnerships between higher education and school districts to increase the number of well-trained school-based mental health service professionals.
- Authorizes the School-Based Mental Health Services Program (SBMH), which assists high-need school districts in recruiting, hiring, and retaining school-based mental health professionals.

► **Provide \$250 million within Safe Schools National Activities** divided between the School-Based Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant program and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant program to address severe shortages of school-based mental health professionals (school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors).

- Nearly 20% of children aged 3-17 have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder (National Healthcare Quality & Disparities Report, HHS, 2022).
- These grants are critical to ensuring school districts have dedicated funding to address shortages of school-based mental health professionals trained to address students' challenges.

FAST FACTS ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

- One in six children have a mental health condition, but only half receive any mental health services (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2023)
- Nearly 20% of children aged 3-17 have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder (2022 National Healthcare Quality & Disparities Report).
- 9.4% of children aged 3-17 (approximately 5.8 million) have been diagnosed with anxiety. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- 8.9% of children aged 3-17 (approximately 5.5 million) have a diagnosed behavior problem. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- In 2021, suicide was the second most common cause of death among youth aged 10-14. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)