



2021-23 State Budget Talking Points

School-Based Mental Health Funding

Governor: The governor's proposed budget provides an increase of \$22.5 million in 2021-22 and \$24 million in 2022-23 for school mental health categorical aid.

In addition, the governor's budget proposes to expand the school mental health categorical aid program to support all pupil service professional staff expenditures and provide a roughly 10 percent reimbursement of such expenditures in each year of the biennium. (Pupil service professionals include school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and school nurses.)

The governor's proposed budget also increases funding for school-based mental health services (a/k/a Collaboration) grants by \$3.5 million in each year of the biennium and expands the definition of mental health providers to allow more rural school districts and qualified organizations to access these grants by partnering with independent providers or other organizations.

WASB: Secure a significant increase in resources for school-based mental health services to students (and staff).

Talking Points:

- It is estimated that as many as one in every five (20%) Wisconsin students will experience a mental health issue at some point in their schooling that impairs their ability to learn.
- Even before the pandemic, student mental health needs were identified as a key concern.
- Stressors like academic achievement, school safety, poverty, and social media have been identified as contributors to increasing rates of mental health disorders among adolescents.
- These disorders include major depression, suicidal thoughts, and psychological distress.
- School nurses, psychologists, social workers, and counselors are often and regularly the first to identify students in need of assistance.
- Of young people who receive mental health assistance, an estimated 70 to 80% receive their mental health services in their schools.
- School mental health services and supports are an effective means of both addressing student's mental health needs and improving the learning environment.
- Comprehensive school mental services help educators prevent and respond to crises. They can also help to foster a school climate that supports teaching and learning.
- Providing these services confidentially within the school can avoid the stigmatization that often prevents students from seeking help.
- School-based services may also prevent the learning disruption that may result if students have to travel to and from appointments with mental health professionals that might not be located close to school.