



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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New Jersey Department of Education Receives \$14 Million Federal Grant to Support Youth Mental Health Efforts

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) announced today that New Jersey has been awarded a five-year \$14 million federal grant to expand school-based mental health services for students. The School Based Mental Health Services Grant Program funding will be used to expand the number of psychologists, counselors, and social workers in New Jersey schools with the greatest need.

This funding represents another step in the Murphy Administration’s ongoing efforts to leverage funds to provide comprehensive youth mental health services for students throughout the state.

The 2021 U.S. Surgeon General’s [Report](#) on Protecting Youth Mental Health concludes that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the US with a reported mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder.

"Addressing the youth mental health crisis – especially given the challenges young people throughout our state and the nation have faced over the past few years – remains one of my top priorities as both Governor of New Jersey and Chair of the National Governor’s Association," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "My Administration continues to take a coordinated, multi-pronged approach to ensuring our youth can access the mental health resources and support they need. This federal grant and the matching State dollars we are putting towards expanding and improving upon mental health services in our schools represents an important step in these ongoing efforts."

"The award of this grant is the culmination of a collaborative effort that includes the support of school counselors, social workers, psychiatrists, and other leaders in school communities, **said Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "New Jersey is acutely aware of the need for these initiatives and I thank Governor Murphy and education stakeholders throughout New Jersey for their support of this work."

The U.S. Department of Education grant will provide New Jersey with \$3.2 million in federal funding in the first year, and at least \$2.7 million each year over the next four years. New Jersey has pledged to match the federal grant funding with \$1 million annually in state funds.

The NJDOE will distribute funds to school districts through a competitive grant process that will target communities with higher levels of poverty and the greatest need. The program will not only focus on expanding the number of mental-health professionals working in school districts, but it will also help diversify the cohort of professionals who provide school-based mental-health services to students.

The \$14 million School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program will complement other efforts in New Jersey to combat the youth mental health crisis. For example:

- Recently, Governor Murphy leveraged over \$55 million of federal Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal and Recovery Funds in the American Rescue Plan to support interagency efforts to improve access to mental health services for New Jersey youth.

- The NJDOE has designated nearly \$80 million from the state’s set-aside funding for Mental Health Supports & Services funding to help districts build a continuum of school-based mental health services for students and educators, in coordination with existing county and local services. [Allocations](#) for these funds were based upon total student enrollment, with a minimum of \$45,000 per local educational agency (i.e., district, charter school or renaissance school project, or approved private school for students with disabilities).
- In 2020, the Governor established mental health working group, which developed and published the [New Jersey Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Resource Guide](#). The document provides a comprehensive roadmap for schools to evaluate their mental-health services and establish programs to provide services and interventions to support students.
- In 2021, the Governor signed [legislation](#) to create a grant program to encourage school districts to partner with colleges and universities in training school-based mental health services providers.
- In 2021, the Governor also signed [legislation](#) to establish a “Mental Health Screening in Schools Grant Program” which provides \$1 million to establish depression screenings in schools selected for participation and then assess the success of the program.

In the coming months, the NJDOE will release more information about the competitive grant process for the School Based Mental Health Services Grant Program and will provide additional resources and assistance to help districts more effectively recruit and retain mental health professionals.

