



Student Mental Health Services

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) strongly supports investments in student mental health services.

In recent years, NYSSBA has increasingly heard from school leaders on the growing number of students who arrive at school grappling with mental illnesses. District leaders want to support their students by making direct services available which may otherwise not be. Too many districts across the state face shortages of nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers and other important mental health professionals.

The recent Executive budget proposed \$1.5 million to support enhanced mental health and school climate support services, specifically targeted to middle schools and junior high schools. According to the proposal, up to \$500,000 of this funding could be used to support a school mental health technical assistance center. While NYSSBA appreciates the recognition of the issue, we believe this proposed allocation is inadequate to make a meaningful impact on mental health for students and school districts across the state.

NYSSBA offers two additional paths for the state to consider which could assist school districts in supporting students who have mental health needs. First, a new expense-based aid could be established that would reimburse districts for a percentage of the dollars spent on approved services and the staff necessary to provide them. These could include but would not be limited to primary and preventive medical care, reproductive health care, dental, vision, nutrition counseling, and other mental health services. Such a reimbursement could be a “last dollar” reimbursement, limited to those expenses not covered by Medicaid or other dedicated sources.

In addition, NYSSBA recommends capital costs associated with creating school health and mental health facilities be fully building-aid eligible. By supporting districts in establishing the infrastructure to provide these services, more students may be served, especially in rural areas in which access to community based providers may be limited.

NYSSBA supports the provision of additional resources in the 2019-20 budget to deliver additional mental health programs and services to students. For additional information, please call NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.