

# MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

TARGETED ADVOCACY AREA

## THE ISSUE:

### Cross-Systems Mental Health Funding

## PRIORITY:

To support the social and emotional well-being of students through sustained and enhanced access to school and community-based mental health services and supports



BERKS COUNTY  
**COLA**  
Committee on Legislative Action

**17.3%**

OF STUDENTS REPORTED THEY ENGAGED IN SELF-HARM.

**10.4%**

OF STUDENTS REPORTED THEY ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.

WHEN ASKED  
**40.5%**

OF STUDENTS SAID THEY FELT DEPRESSED OR SAD.

**17.9%**

OF STUDENTS REPORTED THEY SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE.

## PAYS SURVEY

2021 data from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey Berks County Report.

12,415 students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 participated.

The mental health and well-being of the more than 70,000 students we serve in Berks County are a shared responsibility of the greater community. At the forefront of that initiative are our schools which play a critical role in supporting children's mental health and whole-person development. Academics and healthy emotions, habits, and relationships are all intertwined. Many students' mental health diagnoses are first identified in schools, and schools are often where students are first connected to mental health services and support.

Because schools are integral to children's healthy development, funding local mental health resources to support our education system and student needs in Berks County is vital.

## BARRIERS

to mental health services

- Wait lists / Community staffing shortages
- Complexities within family systems
- Lack of awareness or knowledge of how to access systems of care
- Availability of transportation
- Costs / Insurance issues\*

\*e.g., no insurance, limitations to private insurance, authorizations, out-of-pocket costs

2021-2022

**8,425**

BERKS COUNTY STUDENTS

were referred to the Student Assistance Program (SAP) for support.

**4,438**

STUDENTS WERE REFERRED DUE TO SOCIAL OR BEHAVIORAL CONCERNS.

**3,851**

STUDENTS RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE RECOMMENDED SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT OR SERVICE.\*

**1,899**

STUDENTS ACCESSED A RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT OR SERVICE.\*\*

\*School-based services may include academic support, school team supports, group intervention, one-to-one counseling, social work services, crisis intervention, or alternative placements.

\*\*Community-based supports may include mental health, drug and alcohol, or children and youth services.

## ACT 55 OF 2022

- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) administered **\$95 million for School Safety and Security Program grants specifically focused on school-based mental health initiatives.**
- The grants are designed to support projects such as risk and threat assessment, violence prevention curricula and programs, counseling services, professional learning and training, mental health screening, trauma-informed approaches, and coordinated cross-system partnerships.
- **The grant project period runs from August 1, 2022, through July 31, 2024, limiting sustainability.**

## ACT 80 OF 2012

- Act 80 allowed for the creation of the Human Services Block Grant which provides for **greater flexibility for spending between mental health, developmental disability, drug and alcohol, and other social service allocations.**
- The funds provide community-based mental health, behavioral health, drug and alcohol, and additional social services.
- Since 2012, the mental health allocation under the **Human Services Block Grant has been reduced by 10% with no restoration to those funding levels.**

## KEY TALKING POINTS

- PCCD provides \$3,024,163 of funding to Berks County schools **for mental health projects over two years.**
- Berks County schools plan to use funds to:
  - provide counseling services (67%).
  - implement violence prevention programs (67%).
  - support early identification and intervention for mental health (67%).
  - invest in coordination of local and county mental health services (43%).
  - provide training and resources for school personnel in areas such as trauma-informed approaches, early identification and intervention, and positive behavior support (33%).

- **The Block Grant** provides the following supports and services to youth and Berks County schools:
  - Student Assistance Program support
  - Prevention programs such as Kids Against Pressure, etc.
  - Coordination of service
  - Respite
  - Treatment services for all levels of care for uninsured
  - Crisis Intervention and Emergency Services
  - Intake and Referral Services



**= 10% DECREASE IN  
BLOCK GRANT FUNDING**  
**= 30% INFLATION**  
**= NO INCREASED FUNDING  
FOR HUMAN SERVICES**

**\$ Investments in both the PCCD Safety and Security and Human Services Block Grants are needed to improve cross-system coordination and integration of supports for students and families.**

## OUR ADVOCACY ASK

- **Continue state funding** of school safety and mental health projects beyond grant end on July 31, 2024, to sustain current initiatives across school districts, intermediate units, and career and technology centers.
- **Transfer the administration** of the mental health grants under Article XIII-B of the School Code from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- **Afford school entities local discretion and flexibility** in use of mental health funds by eliminating the tiered structure currently outlined in Article XIII-B.
- **Increase funding** allocated for the Human Services Block Grant to:
  - **improve strategies to connect families** to all levels of mental health care.
  - **increase funding** of prosocial and prevention programming.
  - **expand Student Assistance Programs** available in school buildings.
  - expand and strengthen **suicide prevention and mental health crisis services.**



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