

ASSEMBLY, No. 4929

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 5, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblyman ANTHONY S. VERRELLI

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Dunn

SYNOPSIS

“College Mental Health Services Act”; establishes grant program for public institutions of higher education and requires public institutions of higher education to report certain information concerning mental health treatment and suicides.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/30/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning mental health on college campuses and
2 supplementing chapter 62 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “College
9 Mental Health Services Act.”

10
11 2. a. There is established in the Office of the Secretary of
12 Higher Education the “College Mental Health Services Grant
13 Program.” The purpose of the program shall be to allocate grant
14 moneys to public institutions of higher education to improve access
15 to mental health services on the campuses of the institutions.

16 b. A grant received by a public institution of higher education
17 under the program shall be specifically used for efforts to improve
18 student access to, and the timeliness of the provision of, mental
19 health services and supports. The grant may be used for, but is not
20 limited to:

21 (1) developing initiatives to reduce wait times for students
22 seeking mental health services and supports;

23 (2) hiring additional mental health professionals to provide
24 mental health services and supports to students at the institution;

25 (3) contracting with independent public or private entities to
26 provide mental health services and supports;

27 (4) creating methods to enhance the identification of students
28 who may be experiencing personal, school, or family difficulties
29 impacting the student’s mental health; and

30 (5) implementing efforts to increase awareness among students
31 of existing on-campus and community resources for students
32 experiencing mental health difficulties.

33 c. To be eligible for consideration for a grant award, a public
34 institution of higher education shall submit an application to the
35 Secretary of Higher Education, in accordance with application
36 procedures and requirements prescribed by the secretary. A grant
37 application shall include a complete description of the institution’s
38 specific plans and objectives for the use of the grant funds and any
39 other information specified by the secretary.

40 d. The secretary shall establish selection criteria for the
41 awarding of grant funds under the program. The secretary shall
42 establish the amount for each grant that is approved.

43
44 3. a. There is created within the Office of the Secretary of
45 Higher Education a fund to be known as the “College Mental Health
46 Services Grant Fund.” The fund shall be used to provide grants to
47 New Jersey public institutions of higher education under the
48 “College Mental Health Services Grant Program” established
49 pursuant to section 2 of this act.

1 b. The fund shall annually be credited with moneys
2 appropriated by the State, any moneys received by the State from
3 corporate donors or other private sector support, and any federal
4 funds which may become available for higher education and mental
5 health services and supports purposes.

6
7 4. Beginning with the first full academic year following the
8 date of enactment, a public institution of higher education shall
9 provide for public inspection on its Internet website information on:

10 a. the total number of students enrolled in the institution who
11 committed suicide;

12 b. the total number of students enrolled in the institution who
13 attempted to commit suicide;

14 c. the ratio of students to mental health professionals at the
15 institution;

16 d. the total number of students who had appointments with a
17 mental health professional at the institution;

18 e. the number of students who had only one appointment with a
19 mental health professional at the institution;

20 f. the number of students who had three or more appointments
21 with a mental health professional at the institution;

22 g. the total number of appointments made by students with
23 mental health professionals at the institution;

24 h. the average number of appointments for those students who
25 had more than one appointment with a mental health professional at
26 the institution;

27 i. the average wait time for students to meet with a mental
28 health professional at the institution;

29 j. the number of students who were referred to outside mental
30 health services; and

31 k. the number of students who were referred to emergency care
32 due to mental health concerns.

33 The information required pursuant to this section shall be
34 recorded for each semester and shall be posted no more than 60
35 days following the end of each semester. The information shall be
36 posted on the institution's Internet website in a prominent and
37 easily accessible location.

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39 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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44 This bill, known as the "College Mental Health Services Act,"
45 establishes in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the
46 "College Mental Health Services Grant Program." The purpose of
47 the program will be to allocate grant moneys to senior public
48 institutions of higher education and county colleges in the State to

1 establish or improve access to mental health services on the
2 campuses of the institutions.

3 A grant received by a public institution of higher education
4 under the program is to be specifically used for efforts to improve
5 student access to, and the timeliness of the provision of, mental
6 health services and supports. The grant may be used for, but is not
7 limited to: developing initiatives to reduce wait times for students
8 seeking mental health services and supports; hiring additional
9 mental health professionals to provide mental health services and
10 supports to students at the institution; contracting with independent
11 public or private entities to provide mental health services and
12 supports; creating methods to enhance the identification of students
13 who may be experiencing personal, school, or family difficulties
14 impacting the student's mental health; and implementing efforts to
15 increase awareness among students of existing on-campus and
16 community resources for students experiencing mental health
17 difficulties.

18 The bill also requires public institutions of higher education to
19 post on their Internet websites the following information for each
20 semester: the total number of students enrolled in the institution
21 who committed suicide; the total number of students who
22 attempted to commit suicide; the ratio of students to mental health
23 professionals at the institution; the total number of students who
24 had appointments with a mental health professional at the
25 institution; the number of students who had only one appointment
26 with a mental health professional; the number of students who had
27 three or more appointments with a mental health professional; the
28 total number of appointments made by students with mental health
29 professionals; the average number of appointments for those
30 students who had more than one appointment with a mental health
31 professional; the average wait time for students to receive
32 appointments with a mental health professional; the number of
33 students who were referred to outside mental health services; and
34 the number of students who were referred to emergency care due to
35 mental health concerns. The information will be updated no more
36 than 60 days following the end of each semester and will be posted
37 on the institution's website.

38 The demand and need for mental health services and supports by
39 students on college campuses has increased significantly in recent
40 years. The grant program established under this bill seeks to help
41 public institutions of higher education in the State that may be
42 facing challenges in providing a sufficient level of mental health
43 services and supports to their students. In addition, the bill's
44 provisions requiring a public institution of higher education to
45 provide information regarding mental health treatment and student
46 suicides will help raise awareness of, and provide insight into, the
47 critical issue of mental health on college campuses.